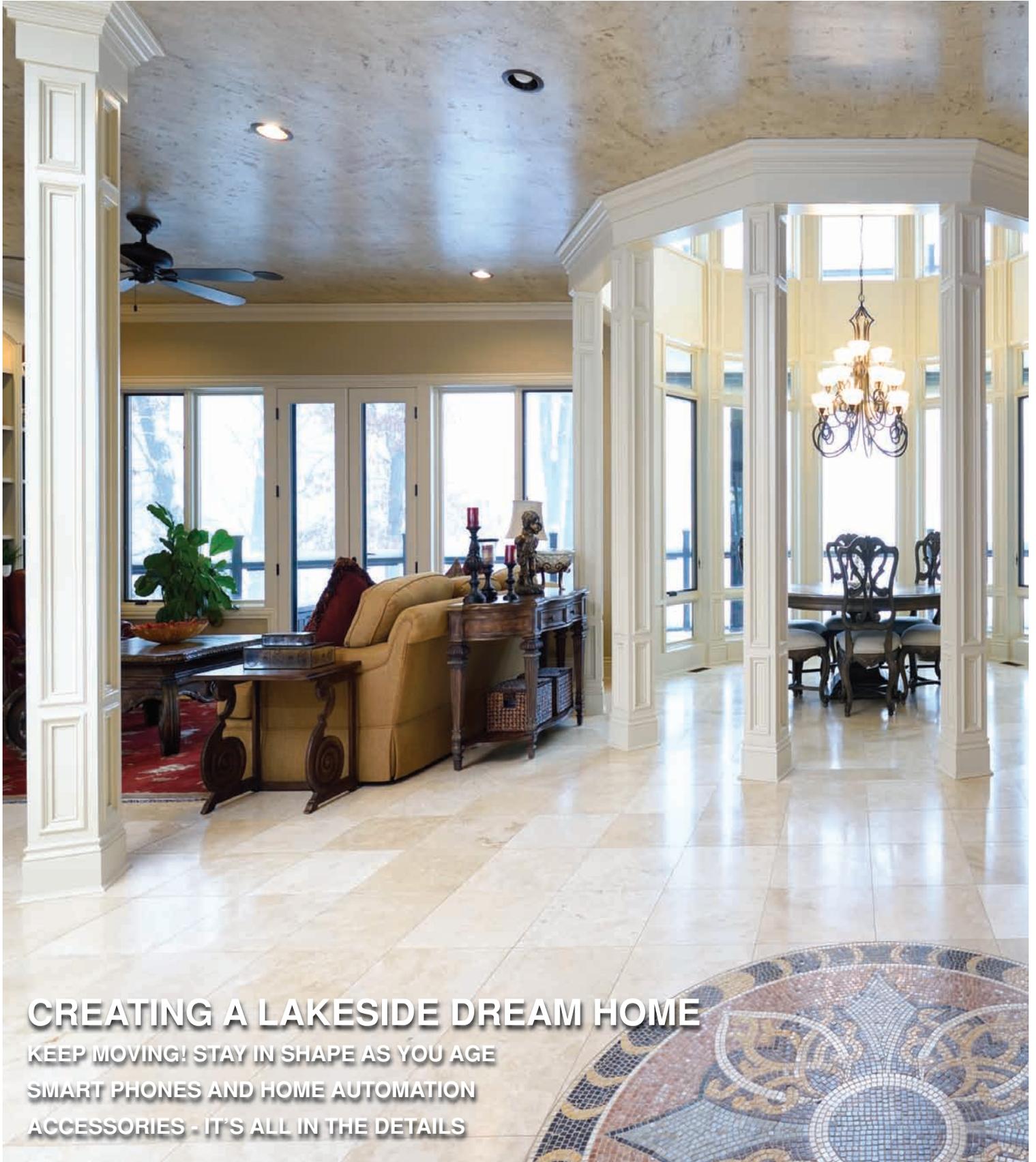


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Magazine

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WINTER 2016



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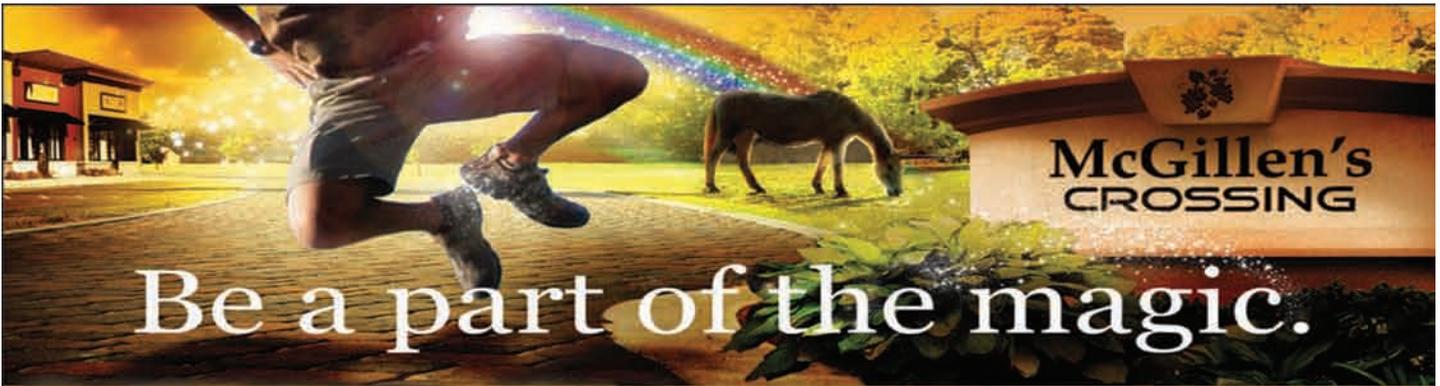
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It's all about you, *Kalamazoo*

My wife Lisa and I chose to come to Kalamazoo and raise our children here 28 years ago. I grew up in Marshall, Michigan and Lisa grew up in Homer, Michigan, two small towns that have a lot of charm. When we first moved to Kalamazoo, I had often talked about moving back to Marshall in my retirement years, but that thought faded quickly. It did not take long to make the decision to stay in Kalamazoo because of all it has to offer. I have put together a small list of reasons we have made this decision. Hopefully, you will read my list and think about staying in our wonderful county for a lifetime as well.

10. Kalamazoo County Public Schools. The "Kalamazoo School Case" of 1858 paved the way for giving school boards the right to levy taxes to support high school. Because of the findings related to this case in 1874, school boards can levy the right amount of taxes to allow for high school education. Kalamazoo was a pioneering community for education in the 1800s and throughout history. This pioneering spirit was revisited with the enormous gift of the Kalamazoo Promise.

9. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Davenport University, and Spring Arbor University all have been part of the Kalamazoo Higher Education landscape for a long time; some of them have been here for more than a century. I, along with many in the community, have enjoyed our experience with these nationally recognized schools. Some of us are Broncos while others are Hornets or Cougars. No matter what institution we are talking about, the community is rewarded with great community partners.

8. Lakes. Kalamazoo County is perfect for anyone who enjoys water sports. Whether it is fishing, skiing, or swimming, Kalamazoo has the lake for you. There are over 100 lakes in the county ranging from the 7 acre Tub Lake to the over 2,000 acre Gull Lake.

7. Location. Not only does Kalamazoo County have great inland lakes, we are also only 40 miles away from the world's greatest lake, Lake Michigan. My family has always enjoyed our trips to Lake Michigan be it for the day or for a week. It is truly one of our nation's most beautiful and important assets.

6. Downtown. The downtown area of Kalamazoo County is many places. There is the larger Kalamazoo downtown in the City that has a lot to see and do but there are more downtowns in the county's outlying areas that have their own charm and fun things to do. Antique stores, family run restaurants, and specialty shops can be found in nearly all of our downtown areas throughout the county.

5. Local Flavor. In all of the downtowns mentioned above you can find amazing food, beverages and breweries. Kalamazoo County is well known for our Greek flavor as well as a wide variety of ethnic foods. If you seek a pleasant beer, look around you in Kalamazoo. We have a rich tradition of local brewing with many different styles and flavors.

4. Entrepreneurial Spirit. Our community has been a leader in business for over 100 years. Hoekstra's Hardware had been here since 1867. We have been known for many different businesses like celery, windmills, guitars, paper products, pharmaceuticals, bedding plants, medical equipment, cars, and now beer.

3. History. The first settlers came through in the late 1600s and the territory was opened up in the late 1700s bringing more people to the area. We are fortunate to have such wonderful institutions like: Kalamazoo Valley Museum, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, and the public library, to name a few that help teach us our history.

2. Health Care. Kalamazoo is home to Borgess and Bronson Hospitals and now the Western Michigan University School of Medicine. Together they provide a higher level of care and learning than most communities the size of Kalamazoo receive.

1. The People. The people of Kalamazoo County have always stepped up for one another. The caring, grace, and love shown in Kalamazoo is by far the greatest you will ever find. There have been storms and there have been incidents leaving damage in their wake, and through it all we stand strong together, Kalamazoo Strong!

As for my family and me, we are blessed to call Kalamazoo home.

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Celebrate the Season



Grandma's Polish Chrusciki

Photography by Linda Hoard

Cold and snowy outside? Warm up in the kitchen with a crisp piece of deliciousness sometimes called Angel Wings. This recipe came from Poland with my great grandparents many years ago. I remember eating them as a child at Christmastime at my grandma's house, and now my mom is passing the recipe down to her children and grandchildren. A Christmas tradition, but they're so good all year round.

2 whole eggs
2 egg yolks
1/4 cup confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons melted butter
1 tablespoon brandy or brandy flavoring
1 tablespoon grated lemon rind
1 3/4 cups sifted flour
Lard for frying

Beat eggs and yolks until light and fluffy. Add sugar, butter, brandy and lemon rind and continue beating. Gradually add flour and mix well. You will have a very stiff dough. Turn onto a lightly floured board and knead lightly. Chill for 30 minutes. Roll dough out as thin as possible. Cut into strips 3 inches long by 1 inch wide. Cut a gash in the center of each strip and pull one corner of the dough through the gash so it looks like a twist. Heat lard to 365 degrees and fry until light brown. Drain on absorbent paper for about three minutes, then roll in Confectioner's sugar.



Recipe courtesy of Grandma Terry

Great Things Local

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Photo courtesy of Expressions by Jan

It's All in the Details

By Zinta Aistars

Those favorite collectibles, where to put them? The couch, does it belong there, against that wall? Or maybe facing the big window? The walls look so bare. Not sure about the colors. Stripes or checks? The blinds for the windows seemed like a good idea, but perhaps draperies would be better?

SO CONFUSING.

"You need a plan for a home," says Dian Latora, owner of Cork Lane Decorating Center at 1101 East Cork Street in Kalamazoo. She's been an expert at creating such plans for homes for more than 30 years.

"You can't just take a room and plopp your furniture into it," Latora says. "You have to give it the wow-factor. A house is a house, but having a plan and adding accessories reflect the personality of the person living there—and that makes it a home."

Designing a room, or an entire house, may seem like an easy enough project to do, but Latora says an expert's touch can make all the difference.

"One of the most common mistakes I see people make is to overbuy," she says. "And that's where a designer can save you money. People see something they like at the store, buy it and take it home, only to find it doesn't really fit in. Or they don't know how to make everything in the room work together."

Cork Lane Decorating Center can, Latora says, decorate your home from floor to ceiling, starting with flooring, to paint colors or wallpaper, add in the furniture, finally hang the

draperies. It all begins with a consultation at the store or, preferably, at home.

"I may spend about an hour at the customer's home," Latora says. "It helps to give me an idea of the customer's style and a feel for the home, and we can discuss the budget. We can do it all at once or decorate in layers, as budget allows."

The starting point to a plan for the home can often be one piece that inspires. It might be an heirloom of some kind, or a



Photo courtesy of Flair Interiors



Photo courtesy of Expressions by Jan

favorite chair. Or, it helps to find a focal point in the room. A focal point can be a dramatic fireplace or a window with a breathtaking view or a comfortable sofa in an eye-catching color.

Nicole Hopson is an interior designer at Flair Interiors, originally Draperies on Wheels, at 427 West Cork Street. She, too, prefers to begin with an in-home consultation.

"It's a free service we provide, and visiting your home gives me a chance to take accurate measurements and prevent mistakes later," Hopson says. "I ask a lot of questions, because what a customer

wants in home accessories varies customer to customer. We can do all of it, or just the finishing touches."

Home accessories, Hopson says, define a space and tell visitors to that home something about the homeowner.

"Accessories make your home unique," she says. "They can often tell about your travels. Accessories can include rugs and pillows, florals and displays, or just a little bench by the fireplace. Designing on your own can be overwhelming, but you don't have to spend a lot of money to get the benefit of a designer's objective eye."

Common mistakes Hopson sees in homes are a matter of scale. A homeowner may have bought a huge sectional sofa and then placed it in a tiny room, making the room seem even smaller. Or, a large room may contain a few too-small pieces and feel cavernous.

"I can help with the flow," Hopson says. "Sometimes it's as simple as placing a couple of vases in just the right places, but we can do as much of the work as the customer likes. We not only deliver, but we will hang your artwork, plug in your lamps. We don't just sell you stuff—we set it up for you. It's a very personalized experience."

"You should love your windows. Window treatments create the feeling of the room," says Jan Guigue of Expressions by Jan.

Guigue specializes in window treatments, although she also accessorizes homes with bedspreads, place mats, pillows, shower curtains, and fabrics for various coverings to pull a room together. Expressions by Jan is a mobile service, with Guigue headquartered in South Haven, but visiting homes to add her touch throughout Southwest Michigan.

"On average, I spend an hour and a half in your home for our initial consultation," Guigue says. "I do the measuring, the design work, the organizing, and then I delegate to the installers. People usually come to me through referrals. I have some third generation clients."

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Guigue assesses the home and its “eyes on the world,” the windows, to start, but then talks to the homeowner about his or her lifestyle, children and their needs, even pets.

“When you are in a home, you look out. What you see outside those windows is often your focal point,” Guigue says. “The window treatment you choose can also increase the acoustic value of the room. At night, when you close up the windows, it can give the room a cozy feel.”

As a general guideline, Guigue plans an expense of about \$200 per window in new construction, but she advises using the help of a professional “because it can often save you money when you consider how that helps you avoid all those wrong measurements and impractical choices. A pro keeps you on track. Not just what’s pretty, but a pro will consider if it keeps out the sun glare. All those details you may forget.”

If windows are arguably the most important accessory to a home, the variety of treatment options are nearly



Photo courtesy of Flair Interiors

endless. Expressions by Jan offers window shading, draperies, fabrics, vertical or horizontal blinds in wood or bamboo, mini blinds or silhouette, solar blinds, fringe, shutters, panel tracks, with or without insulating or thermal lining. Add pleats—Euro, goblet or French—or consider adding a bit of flash with wood or metal rods, clear or painted. A finial can make a nice finishing touch. Maybe a valance.

Head spinning yet? Call that professional for a free in-home consultation.

“Your only stopping point is your imagination,” Guigue says.



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Keep Moving! Stay in Shape as You Age

By Jeff Palmer

S Stay in Shape as You Age with Help from a Local Fitness Expert and the Federal Government.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services issued the federal government's first-ever "Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans" in 2008 to help us understand the types and amounts of physical activity that offer important health benefits.

The Guidelines recommend 60 minutes of physical aerobic activity daily for children ages 6-17 and 30 minutes daily for adults ages 18-64. Adults aged 65 and older who are fit and have no limiting chronic conditions, should follow the guidelines for the 18-64 crowd. (There are no guidelines for children age five and under!)

Anyone with physical limitations or chronic conditions should understand whether and how their conditions affect their ability to do regular physical activity safely. The first step is to check with your doctor.

Adults who are physically active are healthier and less likely to develop many chronic diseases than adults who aren't active – regardless of their gender or ethnicity.

According to the Guidelines, adults should engage in moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity for 30 minutes at least five times each week, and strengthening activities, such as push-ups, sit-ups and lifting weights, at least two days a week for 30 minutes. Try to do aerobic physical activity in episodes of at least 10 minutes and, if possible, spread it out through the week.

Relax, it's not as daunting as it may sound. Moderate aerobic activities can include biking slowly, canoeing or kayaking, ballroom dancing, general gardening, using your manual wheelchair, arm cycling, walking briskly and water aerobics.

Vigorous activities might include basketball, jump-rope, running or bicycling on hills, soccer, swimming laps and martial arts. Note: Watching other people engage in these activities doesn't count unless you ride your exercise bike or lift weights at the same time.

Not sure whether you are exercising at a moderate or vigorous level? Try the "talk test." If you can talk while you're active, then you are participating at a moderate level. If you can only say a few words without stopping to catch your breath, then you are engaging in vigorous activity.

Muscle-strengthening activities engage all the major muscle groups: legs, hips, back, chest, stomach, shoulders and arms. These might include: lifting weights, doing push-ups and sit-ups, and working with resistance bands. Don't have free-weights? Common household items such as bottles of wine and cans of beer can also be used. Or perhaps bottles of water and cans of vegetables.

Bone-strengthening activities are also recommended and can include aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities like running, jumping rope, basketball, tennis and hopscotch.

JUMP-ROPE AND HOPSCOTCH FOR SENIORS? WHY NOT!

Regular physical activity is essential for healthy aging and it's especially important for older adults because this population is the least physically active of any age group. At the very least, older adults should exercise in order to maintain or improve balance.

The important thing is to avoid inactivity and keep moving. Some physical activity is better than none and any amount has health benefits that accrue throughout our lives.



KEEP MOVING

The vanity license plate on Ken Dettloff’s car says everything you need to know about his philosophy for maintaining good health and living a long, happy life: “Keep Moving.”

“I exercise every day,” says the 74-year-old. “The day I don’t will be the day I die. It’s good for my heart, muscles, stamina, balance, weight, quality of life and more.”

EXERCISE IS THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

And Ken will help you drink from this fountain at Bronson Athletic Club, on Ninth Street in Oshtemo, west of Kalamazoo, where he serves as a certified personal trainer and group exercise instructor. He specializes in improving range of motion, stamina, functional fitness, even cognitive development and social connection, largely for the over-50 crowd.

According to Ken, joining a gym or health club can greatly enhance the fitness experience, especially for older folks whose circle of friends and family may be narrowing.

“Once you join a gym and start going to classes, it gets easier to go back, because you have another family there.” That’s critical to good health, he adds, because isolation and

loneliness are higher predictors of premature death than most serious diseases.

JOIN A GYM AND IMPROVE YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE

What should you look for when shopping for a gym membership? Ken recommends you look for a facility that offers a range of equipment that’s up to date and age-appropriate. It should also offer an array of classes that are led by experienced, certified trainers and instructors.

“A pool is a plus”, he adds. “Because of its buoyancy, water is wonderful for taking the stress off joints and muscles, whether you need physical therapy or to improve your overall fitness.”

As with most consumer purchases, value – knowing what you are getting for the cost of joining and going on a regular basis – is important.

AND CLEANLINESS IS CRUCIAL

A self-described “old-schooler” when it comes to technology, Ken encourages new gym members – especially ones who haven’t been to a gym for years – to be open to the changes in exercise equipment.



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“Technology is really changing the gym experience for the better. Exercise bikes and other equipment now help you record calories burned, miles traveled, reps repeated. New equipment helps you warm up and stretch before your workout begins and helps you cool down afterward.”

Phone apps, heart monitors, and wearable devices such as Fitbits are also common in the gym now and help people record their workouts and measure their progress.

“If you are used to using technology in the workplace and at home, then you will quickly grasp it in the gym,” Ken says. “If you are not as comfortable, no worries. We will help you every step of the way.”

A LOW-TECH APPROACH TO EXERCISE IS ALSO FINE

“Kettle balls, free weights and tension bands never go out of style,” Ken says. “And I encourage paper and pencil log sheets to track exercises you do each day.”

If joining a gym is not your thing, Ken says there are many ways to complete a good workout at home. Good, simple, inexpensive workout routines are available online or elsewhere. Just check with your doctor first, he advises.

And don’t underestimate the workout you can get by vacuuming the rugs, climbing the stairs, and tending a vegetable garden.

“These will improve your fitness and you get a clean house and fresh tomatoes!”

If you live in Michigan, embrace – don’t resist – winter. Fresh winter air is great for you and the oxygen will boost your



creativity. Shoveling snow can also be a good workout if you don’t overdo it.

Walking, he says, is also wonderful. “It’s the best, simplest and least expensive exercise there is.”

What’s the bottom line on staying in shape as you age, according to Ken Dettloff? “Keep moving!”





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An International Team Creates a Lakeside Dream Home

By Zolton Cohen
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At the top of the checklist when purchasing a lakeside lot with the intention of building a home there? Learn to swim.

That was the task facing Ravi and Vihangi, owners of Welcome Home's Winter 2016 Feature Home. Ravi says, "My scary thought was 'what if one of my kids falls into the lake? Then what am I going to do?' I said we are not building until we all know how to swim. So, while we were buying the lot we went to the YMCA and took private lessons for a full year, and now we all can swim."

The couple had lived in the area since 1998 and wanted to remain close to where they have developed friendships, and to where their two children go to school. After considering buying a number of existing homes, lakeside living began to appeal. Fortuitously, on a boat ride with a friend on Crooked Lake, they saw a large lot for sale. They loved it, bought it, and then set about thinking about what kind of home they wanted to put on the 1.5 acre site.

PLANNING STARTED LONG AGO

That process had started early in their lives together, when the couple began dating in college. "We always talked about having a dream home," Vihangi says. "We said we wanted a

swimming pool and a tennis court. We dream high and then work hard and try to get it."

They looked around to determine what types of lake houses they liked. "We decided on kind of a Florida style," Vihangi says. "We liked the way it would look from the lake, with all the windows, and from the front, with a courtyard." The next step was locating a residential designer to help make their dream home come to fruition.

They found one, Valentina Velkova, who had designed an addition for the owner of the school their kids attended. Ravi says, "He was very pleased with her work so he recommended her to us. Then it turned out she lived in the same neighborhood as we were in at the time, so it was easy to meet after work and easy to work together. She understands what we're trying to say and was as excited about the house as we were."

A native of Bulgaria, Valentina Velkova, President of ADIDA, Inc. (Architectural Design, Interior Design and Art), was well versed in the style of home the couple was after. "The 'modern Mediterranean' type look," she says, "is in my blood."

She started the seven-month design process by listening carefully to what Ravi and Vihangi said they wanted in their home. "I began according to the land," she says, fitting all the couple's requirements for the exterior together like a jigsaw



ABOVE: An intricate floor tile mosaic and an open floor plan set the table for the main entry into the house. The view from every room on the first floor is toward the lake.

RIGHT: Shadow lines produced by layers of crown molding, window and door casing and other trim mean that even the hallway to the master bedroom has rich visual interest.





Just off the front foyer, a music room awaits practicing pianists and guitar players.



Originally intended to be located in the basement, this theater room, designed by Troy Cuvelier of Integrated Smart Technologies, Inc., was moved during construction to the bonus room over the garage.

puzzle. Vihangi is a follower of the Chinese philosophical system of feng shui, which is the art of deliberate placement and location of spaces and people in order to create harmonic order. The front entrance had to face east; bedrooms and bathrooms had to align to specific compass points.

"The main point of my design is to express what the clients want," Velkova says. "And one of their most important requirements was to have all the rooms on the first floor look toward the lake. Another was to have the kitchen, which is what I call the control point of the house, look toward the front yard where there is a tennis court. So Vihangi could keep an eye on the kids, yet at the same time be able to see the lake."

At every turn, Velkova presented the couple two or three different options. "I listen to their requirements and hopes and dreams," she says. "And then I translate that through my experience and show them other possibilities. They really need to be able to compare, and I need to know that they're happy with the design after we have explored every possibility. Then they can pick the best one for them, or a mix of two or three ideas."

THE BUILDER IS INVOLVED EARLY

At every stage of the design phase, Ben Smith, co-owner of Smith Brothers Custom Homes, the builder, was around to coordinate the planning with Velkova, Ravi and Vihangi. Smith says, "This project came off fantastically because Valentina, the homeowners and I worked so well together. We were all on the same page, every day, from day one. I was involved in the



ABOVE: Bar stools pulled up to the peninsula countertop provide a handy perching spot for kids to do homework, and also for guests who gravitate to the kitchen during parties.

RIGHT: Located at one end of the home's first floor, an intimate gathering space is complete with a fireplace, custom built-in bookshelves and invitingly comfortable upholstered furniture.



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design with them. They worked together on it, but they kept me close so if there were questions we could head them off at the pass. I think we created a great team."

Although he has 20 years of building experience under his belt, Smith says the house still provided a number of challenges. "This is the largest project I've ever done," he says. "And although I've worked on many other custom homes over the years for other builders, it was the first under my own license. It is a complicated house, and because of its size we had to bring on additional manpower in order to keep it moving forward."

The site itself didn't present any extraordinary issues, Smith says. "It wasn't bad in terms of lake property because the lot is long and wide. There weren't the restrictions you often find in lake homes where you're tight on the sides and back of the land. And it's elevated so we didn't have to worry about water problems. We were lucky we had the space, and Valentina was able to design the house so it incorporated everything they wanted."

GETTING THE NUTS AND BOLTS RIGHT

The house has many windows, and windows contribute no structural integrity to a building's frame. In order to provide sufficient strength to resist wind loads, Velkova worked with Tom Palarz, a structural engineer at Nehil-Sivak Structural Engineers, to design and calculate the capacity of the steel structural elements that had to be integrated into the framing.

Energy efficiency, Ravi says, was an important consideration. "With so many windows in the house we had to pay attention to that. So there are double pane Pella high efficiency windows, and a closed-loop geothermal heating and cooling system that is located under the driveway and tennis court."

Smith says, "Sanderson Insulation did a fantastic job with the foam wall insulation. And there is R-51 insulation in the attic." With 8,400 square feet and a heated garage, the utility bills are what homeowners in a house approximately half the size would expect to pay.

A low maintenance exterior was a priority as well. Ravi says, "We did a lot of research on the stucco, even to the point of driving around and knocking on the doors of homes that have stucco on them. We would ask the owners, 'do you mind telling us how you like your exterior?' So far, in four years, we haven't even washed the outside of the house. The wrap-around decks are also built from low-maintenance materials."

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ABOVE: A fireplace, a high-tech massage chair, and a commanding view of the lake are the prominent themes of the second-floor master bedroom.

RIGHT: A subtle color scheme, exquisite custom cabinetry, a soaking tub, and plenty of light from tall windows produce a sense of calm in the master bathroom.





This bedroom became the testing site for the unusual textured ceilings that appear in every room of the house. After trying many different material mixtures and techniques, builder Ben Smith created the final version.



A children's climbing apparatus, a putting green, and a swimming pool are some of the amenities available in the home's backyard.



Facing the lake, the home's many windows overlook the backyard swimming pool and a recreation area.

OPEN FOR ENTERTAINING

Inside, the idea was to implement a very open floor plan. Vihangi says, "When you walk in, you can see the whole floor, and every room can see out onto the lake. The light comes through and it's so nice. And we entertain a lot. We do a lot of parties, nearly every weekend, so all the space is handy for that." In fact, Ravi laughs, "We sometimes have to schedule time not to party."

Ravi adds, "The first thing you see in many homes is a stairway going up, but we never wanted to see that. And we didn't want a lot of bedrooms. It was more about ambiance, openness and elegance. The house seems bigger because we didn't divide the rooms with walls. With the dining room, the pillars give the shape of the room, but we don't have a wall and a door to go into it. That was the idea; to keep it open."

He continues, "Though I never thought I would have crown molding in an entire house, I think it helps to set it apart from other houses. We wanted multiple layers of trim in each room, so we added baseboard molding under the crown to increase its height and visual mass. Now, whenever I go into anyone's house, I'm always looking up for the crown molding. Where's the crown? And it's usually only in a couple of rooms."

Velkova says, "Every room, every space, was very well thought out to the smallest detail. And there were many changes until Ravi and Vihangi were completely satisfied. We didn't stop until they were happy with the final result."

She adds, "This type of architectural design is very complex. You need to know about personality, about the flow of rooms, the connection of rooms, inside, outside, how the furniture is going to fit, and the shape of the whole building. You also have to think about economy in terms of the physical layout of utilities to make them as efficient to build as possible. And light. I think the designer has to think about where the light needs to be."

By every measure, this truly international team of Valentina Velkova, from Bulgaria, Ravi and Vihangi, of Indian descent, and Ben Smith from the United States came together to produce a home that is a part of all of their contributions and personalities. They have indeed achieved feng shui.





Photo courtesy of Integrated Smart Technologies, LLC and Control4

Smart Phones and Home Automation

By Chris Killian

After a long day at work, you pull up to your home, and before even crossing the threshold, the lights are on in the living room, the shades are drawn shut and your favorite show is on the television. No – your spouse didn't beat you to the house; your smart phone is taking care of things.

Turns out that smart phone in your purse or pocket is smarter than you think.

An increasing amount of homeowners are using their smart phones to remotely tie into a kind of mini-smart grid in their homes, held together with Wifi, allowing them to control all manner of features – from drawing the shades to turning on the TV to setting the thermostat and many things in between.

Even those anxious thoughts that sometimes pop into your head while on vacation – Did I turn out the lights? Did I lock the doors? Or worse yet: did I turn off the stove? – can be put to rest with the simple press of a few buttons.

"Our vision of a smart home isn't you having to be smart about the technology, but the home being smart around you and your needs," says Troy Cuvelier, owner of Integrated Smart Technologies, a firm that specializes in the installation of smart home components.



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The process is fairly straightforward. Appliances, audio-visual equipment, lighting and other home-related elements are either WiFi-enabled themselves or plugged into smart outlets that wirelessly tie into a home's network, which can be controlled through an app on one's smart phone.

Creating a smart home doesn't mean breaking your bank account, either. Simple systems, like integrating wireless outlets into your home, run anywhere from \$50 to \$60, Cuvelier says. Naturally, as more components are added, the price goes up, with fully integrated smart home systems running about \$750 and up, he adds.

"It's price-dependent on what the consumer wants," he says. "You can do as little or as much as you desire. If you just want to control your lights from your phone, you can do that. If you want to control your lights and TV and blinds and your hot tub, you can do that, too. It's not a one-size-fits-all approach. We can customize a smart home while allowing room to grow the system in the future."

Still, Cuvelier says the prices are coming down as more and more homeowners choose to sync various aspects of their homes with their smart phones. He started seeing this trend as soon as the first iPhones emerged around 2008.

"We're seeing more widespread use as apps continue to be developed. What we are seeing is the emergence of the home of the future, and in large part we can thank smart phones for this evolution," he says.

Ed Buday, owner of Buday's Home Electronics Simplified, a firm that also designs and installs smart home systems, says his customers like the ease with which smart phones can help a homeowner control so many aspects of their most valuable investment.

"So much of this kind of technology is rooted in wireless. It's easy to integrate, too," he says. "We don't have to go ripping out walls. The home stays as is."

And as much as homeowners who choose to install this technology in their homes love the convenience of such systems, home security and the ability to remotely monitor one's house is a top reason for looking into adding smart home systems, he says.

"The big three are lights, temperature control and cameras," Buday says. "You could be on a cruise ship in the



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Caribbean and if you had WiFi, you could take out your phone, log into the app that controls your home's system and watch your house in real time."

Aspects of these smart security components even include being notified when someone walks into the home as well as smart locks, where a homeowner can lock or unlock their doors even while hundreds of miles away.

"People are looking for more convenience in their lives and in terms of controlling their home through automation," Buday says. "We're all attached to our devices these days, so it makes sense to make them work for us in ways that don't just revolve around social media and entertainment."

As president of Design Evolutions, Marla Brummer designs high-end homes for her clients. She, too, is seeing an uptick in those she consults with expressing a desire to integrate a smart home system into their new homes. With the ubiquity of smart phones, the choice is pretty easy, she says.

"It's really important for those who own a second home and want to be able to check on things while they're gone," she says. "It's proactive. It's quicker than a home security service. It's real time."

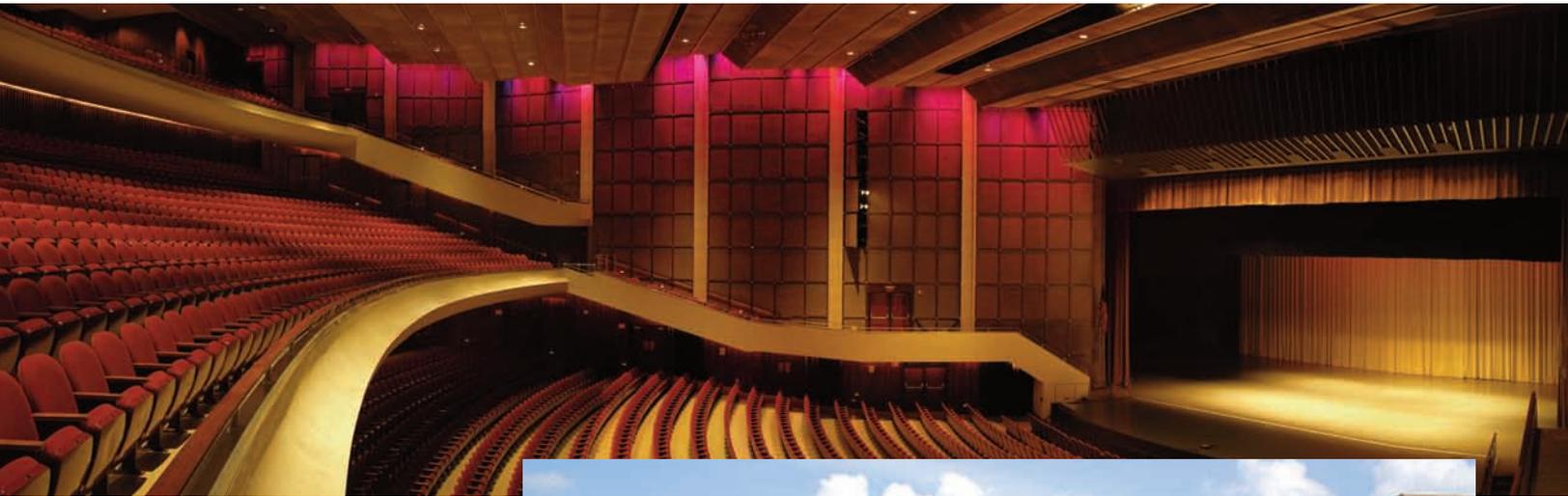
She's quick to point out the conundrum of such autonomous home monitoring, however.

"If you open your smart home app and swipe to your home cameras and see a person you don't know at your front door, now what do you do?" she asks. "The home security service takes care of all that. Still, homeowners like the control they can have with this kind of technology. It's a trade off, for sure, but one many are willing to make."

Much like Buday, Cuvelier says he is seeing growth year on year of homeowners looking to install various smart home systems, tailored to their needs. In terms of future growth? It seems the sky's the limit.

"If you think that we've reached the pinnacle of tech and smart home integration, you're wrong," he says. "We are just scratching the surface."





Because the Show Will Always Go On

By Zinta Aistars

Photos courtesy of Miller Auditorium

T "The arts mean business for the community, and the community means business for the arts!"

Tracey Lawie, director of marketing and programming at Miller Auditorium on the Western Michigan University (WMU) campus, leans over the balcony railing and watches the movement below in the lobby. It's a quiet moment, with just a couple people standing outside the ticket office—and that's rare.

"I've been at Western Michigan University for 20 years, and the director of Marketing at Miller for the past 17," Lawie says. "I was brought here by a three-month series of the worst luck."

She's not kidding. Lawie recounts being held up at gunpoint, having all her belongings stolen, paychecks bouncing, followed by a car accident in which she fractured her neck, all within a matter of weeks while she was working at a theatre in Detroit, where she had attended graduate school.

Lawie chuckles about it now, because she can. She loves her job at Miller.

"I had just moved back to my hometown of Muskegon to regroup when I got a call from the Chair of the Theatre Department," she says. "I had applied for a job the year before and he was wondering if I was still interested. I came down to Kalamazoo to interview and was hired. After three years there, I applied for a job at Miller Auditorium, and the rest is history!"

Lawie's luck had turned, and she's not looking back. Miller Auditorium is a place where good things happen—and have been happening since the auditorium opened in 1968.

"Miller actually had two starts," Lawie says. The idea for an auditorium on WMU's campus, she says, dates back to 1915, when Governor Woodbridge Ferris signed a bill to appropriate funds to build four new buildings, one of which would house the performing arts. "But then the Great Depression and two

World Wars absorbed all the dollars donated.”

With a donation from The Upjohn Corporation in 1944, WMU was able to purchase a piece of land known as The Goat Hills (the hilly terrain of an old golf course), and eventually construction could begin. Miller Auditorium opened its doors at last in January 1968.

Western Michigan University president James W. Miller promised that the new building would present the performing arts “not as culture for culture’s sake, but for the enrichment of the lives of our students, our faculty and our friends in the community.”

“The very first performance at Miller was the WMU Symphony Orchestra on January 12, 1968,” Lawie says. “The Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra performed next on January 16, 1968, and then the Detroit Symphony on January 19, 1968, followed by Roger Williams on January 20. And nearly all seats were sold out.”

Now approaching its 50th anniversary in 2018, Miller Auditorium ranks as one the state’s largest auditoriums with 3,500 seats and one of the top ten performing arts facilities in the country. On average, 100 events open at the auditorium annually, bringing in 200,000 visitors to view internationally renowned musicians and comedians, award-winning dance companies, and national Broadway tours. Miller also hosts community organizations that include the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Kalamazoo Concert Band, University School of Music, Campus Activity Board, and area high school and college graduations.

“When we decide what shows to bring in, we look for what has been very popular and in demand, both on and off Broadway,” Lawie says. “For spotlight events, which are usually for one night only, we look for everything from comedians to dance. Sometimes, the staff piles into a van and we go see the show to make sure it’s good enough for our stage.”

Among the most popular shows gracing Miller’s stage in recent years has been *Les Misérables*, also *Phantom of the Opera*, *Riverdance*, *Wicked*, *Jersey Boys*, and *Cats*. While the shows can technically be very expensive to put on, Lawie says, a large part of Miller’s mission is to give back to the community. More than 6,000 students view performances annually at little or no cost.



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Tickets are donated to 40 nonprofit organizations that serve area youth and also veterans.

"We donate more than 1,000 tickets annually to area service organizations such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Clubs, Lakeside Treatment Center, YWCA and others," Lawie says. "Don't forget we also offer master classes with artists along with educational materials to area schools and WMU students at no cost."

The annual operations of Miller Auditorium contribute substantial economic and social benefits, impacting the local community and regional economy. According to Lawie, "With an average of 25 shows per year, Miller puts \$8 million to \$16 million annually back into our community. If you consider that many of the people who work in the shows stay in town for long periods of time—they need a place to stay, they go to restaurants, they shop—and the people who come to see the shows, the marketing dollars, the salaries paid to those working here, it all adds up."

Miller Auditorium is also one of the top employers on the WMU campus, providing 206 jobs, 11 of which are full-time, 37 part-time, with 60 student jobs and 98 temporary stagehand jobs.

"We bring about 10,000 youth to the campus annually with family shows, graduations, the Michigan Youth Arts Festival, student matinees, and we serve as a recruitment tool for the university," says Lawie.

She tells of Girl Scout parties after hours, when the auditorium doors are closed. "The girls bring in their sleeping bags and fill up the entire lobby. They have master classes or dance workshops during the day, then have pizza after and other fun stuff."

Performers from the shows sometimes also get off the big stage to visit area schools and talk to students about their craft and offer workshops.

"For a city the size of Kalamazoo, we are extraordinarily rich in the arts," Lawie says. "And just imagine: the same number of people came to see Phantom of the Opera at Miller Auditorium over its four weeks of shows as went to see the Super Bowl that year. Now, that's popularity!"





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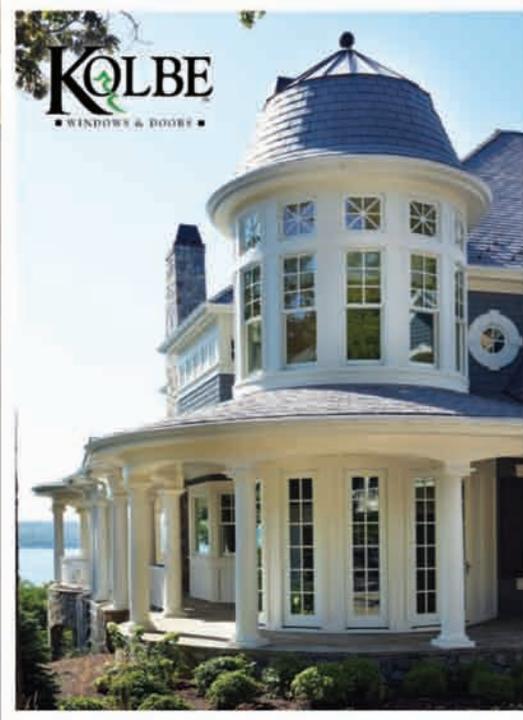
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