HOME Improvement

YOUR GUIDE TO FALL FIX-UPS
ALL AROUND THE HOUSE



INSIDE:

- A Tour of the Redmond Home
- Designer Paints
- Hot Tubs for Two
- DIY Furniture Refinishing

OCTOBER
2010

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE WINCHESTER PRESS



Taking a look inside one of Winchester's oldest homes:

The Redmond House



A view of the Redmond House's parlour, located in the front portion of the home.
Press Photo — Uhrig

by Matthew Uhrig
Press staff

It stands tall and stoic, a landmark on St. Lawrence Street in the heart of Winchester.

The smoke grey stonework reflects another era of village life. Labourers slaved over the stones, drawing them from a quarry near Chesterville approximately 130 years ago. The home was built before Winchester was incorporated as a village in January 1888, before a local railway line was established, and before area men volunteered for their country, going off and fighting in two World Wars. In those days, education was gained through labour.

Today, walking by, one can see that there is life in the stone and, if it could, there's so much the building would say.

It's known as the Redmond Residence, the three-story home of Lyle and Mildred Redmond. It's a house where Lyle has spent the past 80 years of his life, and a home he intends to keep until his time on this earth comes to an end.

With the house in his life, Lyle moved through childhood to his adult years, married his bride in 1949, and, along with Mildred, raised three sons -- Mark, Barry, and Steven. Lyle also established his own business, Redmond Sand and Gravel, which was one of the many companies that worked on the St. Lawrence Seaway expansion. Lyle was the boss, with Mildred as the bookkeeper.

"I've seen a lot of change in my day," Lyle said.

The Redmond name became connected with the home when Lyle was just four years old. At that time, his parents began looking for a home they could call their own.

"Dad said, 'we're gonna buy a house,'" Lyle recalled.

The search began and ended in Winchester, with the family first viewing what is known today as the Angus House, located on the opposite side of St. Lawrence as the Redmond home. The family also checked out another home in the village.

"It [the Angus house] was run down, and it had pigeons living in it," said Lyle.

He explained that his current home was a better option. "This house, it had a pile of soot sitting in the back, but it was in good shape," he said.

The old stone house also had a physical feature that Lyle recalled with such a level of vividness, as if he were back there again as a child of no more than four.

"The front doors, I remember them as if it were yesterday," he said, remembering that the doors were split in half, allowing the owner to open just the top part. "They had peak holes in them, too."

Reddick's roots

The home also resonates historically in Winchester, as it was the place where Dr. Robert Reddick, one of the village's first physicians, set up his practice. It's an important point in time that isn't lost on the Redmonds, and they both relish the significance.

While ambling through the 528 St. Lawrence, Lyle pointed out the rooms thought to be the waiting area, examination room, and Reddick's office.

"His health nurse had an office in here, too," Lyle said, while opening a door to a room that is now the host site of Mildred's many hobbies.

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Redmond house

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Reddick's practice began in the 1870s, after he worked briefly in Kemptville following graduation from McGill University. He took on a larger role in the village when, in 1888, he led the charge to establish Winchester as an independent municipality, serving as one of the first councillors, working under Reeve Aaron Sweet, whom the new downtown Sweet Corner Park is named after. In 1893, Reddick was named reeve.

By the early 1900s, Reddick had ended his Winchester practice, moving it to Ottawa.

"After he left, it sat empty," said Lyle.

Lyle went on to explain that the home ended up being under the ownership of an elderly woman living in Iroquois.

"Annie Wallace was her name. We didn't have a very good car then, but we'd have to drive out once a month to pay her [rent]," he said. "I can remember asking my dad, 'do you think we'll ever get this place?'"

Eventually, the Redmond family, after struggling for some time, was able to save enough funds to purchase the home outright from Wallace.

"It only cost us $3,500," Lyle said with a laugh. "Now it's worth more than a million."

Step inside

Walking up the stone stairway on the front of the Redmond's home, it's hard for one not to imagine moments in the village's history that played out as the house continued to stand tall.

Businesses, dignitaries, and other townspeople have come and gone, but the house has remained as a patriarch of sorts among all the other historical homes in Winchester.

"With the stone, the upkeep for this old place hasn't been as necessary as it could have been," said Lyle.

There has been money spent within the home, though -- close to $500,000, to be precise.

"We had to modernize a lot of it," he said.

Lyle fondly recalls the old furnace that used to sit in the basement.

"It was a wild looking outfit," he said, adding that while his father worked when he was younger, his mother was left in charge of shoveling the coal to keep the family warm. "She'd shovel it all winter. Thankfully, it's all gas now, and it's a lot easier."

Among the other items is the oak floor in the parlour, the old wooden window frames throughout the home, and the colourful slate stone which sits as the flooring in the main hallway.

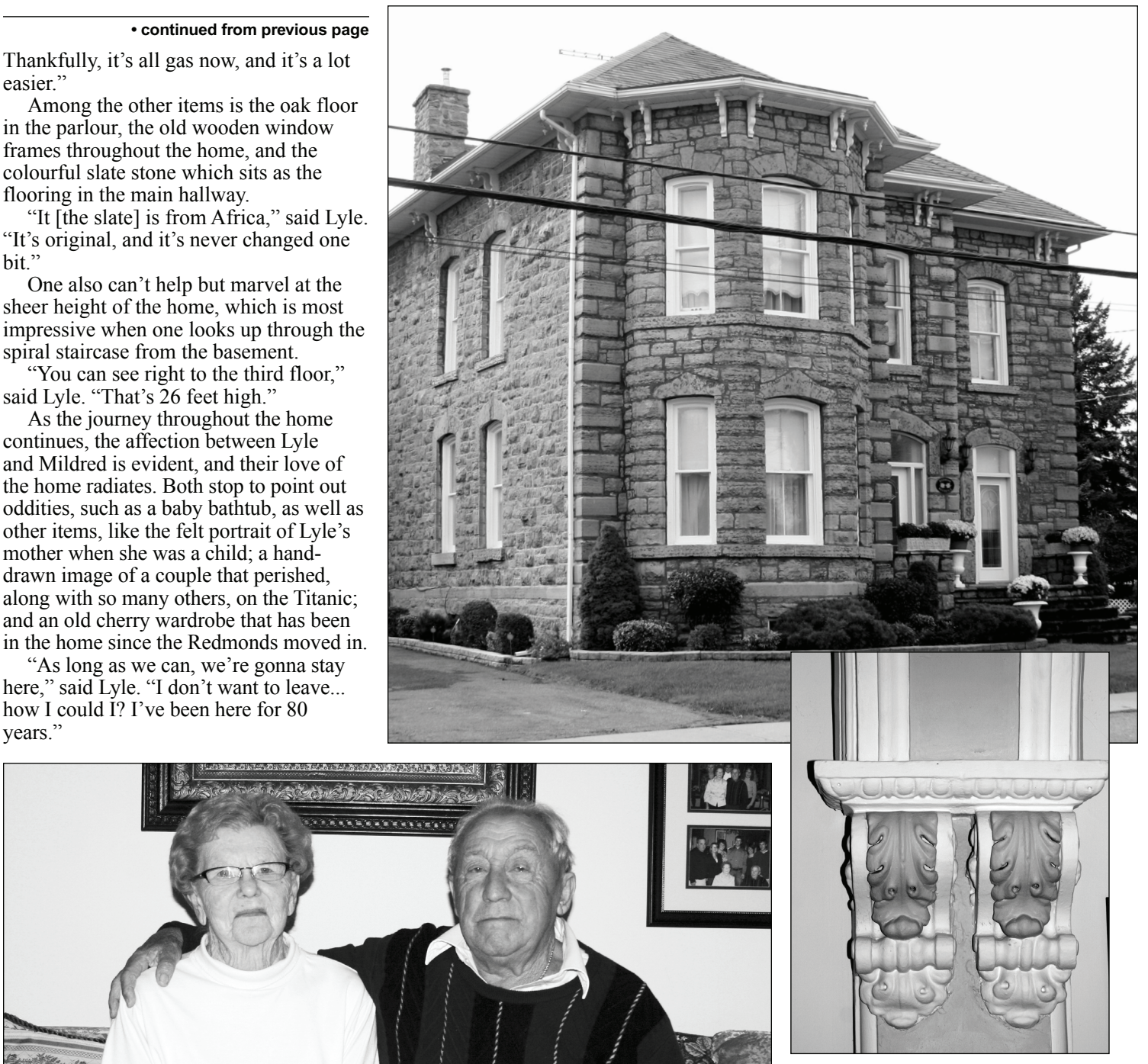
"It [the slate] is from Africa," said Lyle. "It's original, and it's never changed one bit."

One also can't help but marvel at the sheer height of the home, which is most impressive when one looks up through the spiral staircase from the basement.

"You can see right to the third floor," said Lyle. "That's 26 feet high."

As the journey throughout the home continues, the affection between Lyle and Mildred is evident, and their love of the home radiates. Both stop to point out oddities, such as a baby bathtub, as well as other items, like the felt portrait of Lyle's mother when she was a child; a hand-drawn image of a couple that perished, along with so many others, on the Titanic; and an old cherry wardrobe that has been in the home since the Redmonds moved in.

"As long as we can, we're gonna stay here," said Lyle. "I don't want to leave... how I could I? I've been here for 80 years."





Left:
Mildred and Lyle Redmond. The house has been owned by the Redmond family for the last 80 years.

Above:
This design is located on the archway which separates both ends of the parlour.

Top:
An exterior shot of the home that sits at 528 St. Lawrence Street in Winchester. It was built using stones drawn from a quarry near Chesterville approximately 130 years ago.

Press Photos — Uhrig

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REAL ESTATE INSPECTIONS



Tips on making your space smell great



Confessions of a Country Convert

by Adele Eyman

'Tis the season to get your home ready for the colder weather ahead. But, with so many projects to do outside, people may forget about getting the inside of their homes ready, too.

The approach of colder weather means that we will be staying indoors more, with the windows closed and possibly sealed up to minimize drafts. We'll have to run the furnace, along with the woodstove or fireplace, to heat our space. We'll be making more use of the kitchen, as cooking meals replaces the "barbecue and salad" summer menu. We'll keep our pets indoors more, especially during the coldest parts of the winter. We may even have the occasional smoke indoors, or invite our guests to, when the weather gets too bad to step outside and light up.

So, it makes sense to pay attention to the quality of the air inside our living space. Most people know about the dangers associated with indoor air pollutants such as household mould, second-hand smoke, and chemical vapours released from cleaners, paints and aerosol sprays. But, what about indoor air that is stale or just plain smells bad? During the winter months, moisture and heat can build up, especially when there is little air movement. Add the odours of cooking, smoking, and pets, and the indoor air can get pretty bad, pretty quickly.

So, how do you get ready to deal with these kinds of indoor air pollution?

Most experts agree that the best way to keep your home smelling sweet and free from indoor pollutants is to have a good ventilation system in place for the winter. This can be as simple as using a window fan, to move the bad air outside and draw fresh air inside.

Window fans are available from most hardware stores, and start at about $40. They are designed to fit snugly under a window, between the window frame and sill. Adjustable "wings" expand on each side of the fan, to seal off all the space under the window. Position the fan so that it blows out of the home, i.e., it exhausts the interior air to the outside. Open a second window just enough to allow the outside air to be drawn in. If your place is large, you may want to crack open a third window. If your home is drafty, you may not need to open any windows at all. Run the fan during the night when people are asleep and won't notice a slight drop in temperature. If possible, lower the temperature on the thermostat.

In the morning, shut off the fan and remove it from the window. Close up all windows and reset the thermostat. Your space should smell clean and fresh!

This simple but effective ventilation system works well in any space. My Dad used it with our bungalow on the farm; I've used it in apartments, townhouses, and homes without adequate ventilation. Today, most new homes include an air exchange system that meets minimum requirements. Homeowners can also install an air filter and exchange system to suit every health need and budget.

With fresh air available on the other side of the window for free, why then do we buy products that supposedly freshen the air in our homes?

Linda Cobb, known as the "Queen of Clean," says that most people associate "clean" with what they smell.

Since people differ on what smells "good" or "clean" to them, freshly ventilated air may not smell sufficiently "fresh" to create that ideal atmosphere at home. Enter clever marketers, who promote air fresheners beyond their original function of imparting a pleasant smell in the home. Air fresheners have become a lifestyle product, scenting your space to suit your mood and the atmosphere you wish to create in your home. According to a leading market research company, women tend to use air fresheners more for ambiance, and men more for odour elimination. In any case, people are buying the product. A recent article in www.nytimes.com announced that "Febreze has become the 'Official Air Freshener' of the NFL."

North Americans aren't the only ones who like Febreze and other air freshener products. Last year alone, over 1.8 billion air freshener units were sold globally, with sales expected to increase to over 2.1 billion within five years. In fact, global retail sales of air care products are forecast to reach $7.3 billion this year. But how much do we know about the safety of indoor air fresheners? Air freshener technology has used ingredients that are poisonous, that can harm your skin and eyes, that coat the inside of your nasal passages with oil and that numb your nose with nasal anesthetic (like formaldehyde).

But you can make your own air freshener to use when you feel that your home could use a little spritz of something smelling good. The following recipe comes from Linda Cobb in *Talking Dirty with the Queen of Clean.*

Homemade Air Freshener

In a one gallon jug, mix
- *1 cup baking soda*
- *1/4 cup clear ammonia*
- *1 tablespoon scent (oil or extract)*

Slowly add 16 cups of warm water.
Label and store.
To use, shake well, fill a clean spray bottle, and spritz.

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'Cuz you gotta have faith

So what's the secret to staying in business for 25 years? According to Steve Caza, owner of Clear Cut Installations, much of it has to do with good delegating skills and knowing the strength of your employees. "You have to be able to have confidence in people," he said.

Press Photos – Smith-Millar

Clear Cut Installations celebrates 25 years

A 25-year anniversary is an important milestone for any business.

For Steve Caza of Clear Cut Installations, the two and a half decades of renovating and improving local houses and businesses has allowed him to witness significant changes in his industry.

Caza's South Mountain-based company continues to perform all sorts of renovations, from windows and doors to bathrooms, kitchens, roofing, sunroofs, and more – even garages and full-scale additions to houses.

"Windows and doors have been our bread and butter," Caza explained.

He noted that Clear Cut is able to manage entire projects, right from supplying the materials and installation, to painting or plumbing and electrical work, if necessary.

"We take care of the whole job," he said.

Caza has seen many products come onto the market that have given consumers more options – and in some cases, a longer lifespan for their renovation projects.

For example, steel shingles are increasingly available to consumers. Caza pointed out that steel shingles are actually old technology. (For example, the roof of Clear Cut in South Mountain has been safely protected by steel shingles since 1918.) However, along with steel roofs, the shingles are enjoying a commercial resurgence, and are now more readily available to customers of local companies like Clear Cut.

Caza noted that even small technological advancements can make a big difference for homeowners. For example, the use of flexible silicone spacers between layers of window glass can prevent moisture from seeping through the panes. The seemingly minor advancement has made improvements to houses in environments like Canada – where it's alternately freezing cold or scorching hot, depending on the season – or Hawaii, which is humid.

Caza has seen many products come onto the market that have given consumers more options – and in some cases, a longer lifespan for their renovation projects.

"[The spacers] eliminated seal failures," he said. "That product spread around the whole world."

Caza is also excited about T-Rex gutter fastening systems, which can avoid drainage and clogging problems, while withstanding the weight of snow and ice.

From a business standpoint, Clear Cut Installations has taken steps to stay relevant with existing and potential customers in the information age. His company has a slick website (www.clearcutinstallations.com), and Caza noted that many clients are choosing to contact him through email these days.

From a social perspective, Caza noted that women seem more confident when it's time to plan a renovation. In the past, he noted, many wives would leave the big choices up to their husbands.

"The women are a lot more willing to make the decisions," he said, adding that it's always preferable if he meets with couples and plans the changes to their residence with both people present.

Clear Cut Installations employs about 20 workers, most of them full-time. Several people have stayed with Clear Cut for more than two decades.

"We have really good employee retention," he said.

Caza noted that as your business grows, good delegation becomes very important. You also have to know which employees are best suited to particular jobs.

"You have to be able to have confidence in people," he noted.

Caza continues to do a lot of the sales work himself, though, and frequently deals directly with clients at the start of a job. He also believes in doing any task to the best of his ability. That's why Clear Cut has a 10-year "no quibble" installation warranty, which comes with a certificate that customers keep on file.

Despite being constantly busy, Caza makes time for his passion and hobby: art. (His painting and sculpting work can be viewed at www.stevencazasart.com.) Caza's artistic side, and University of Ottawa fine arts education, continues to serve him in a career that's as much about colour schemes and room atmosphere, as it is about tiling and shingles.

Caza has no plans to retire anytime soon. He anticipates remaining at the helm of Clear Cut for at least another 10 or 15 years.

Caza and his wife, Ann, have five children together. He's got his fingers crossed that one of them will eventually show an interest in taking over the business.

"I'm still kind of hopeful," he said with a chuckle. "But I'm not banking on that."

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Furniture arranging 101

Although interior decorators may seem to have the knack for knowing where to place furniture, arranging items that are already owned or new furniture is something just about anyone can master.

When re-designing rooms consider:

• Is the room used to travel through to another room? If so, a clear pathway will be needed.

• Where are the doors and windows located? Furniture should not be placed where it can interfere with a door being opened fully or block too much light.

• How is the room used? For example, furniture shouldn't be placed in a family room so that individuals constantly have to walk past the television and block watchers' views. If a room is used as a sitting space, furniture should be geared around bookshelves or a fireplace.

• What space is available? Too much furniture in a room can create the appearance of clutter. It can also make manoeuvring around the room difficult. Keep furniture scale and quantity in mind when decorating. Once the general idea of where furniture will be placed is decided, it helps to take measurements to ensure everything will fit. There's little point hefting around heavy furniture only to move it back to its starting position if something doesn't fit correctly. Making a reduced-scale model of the room and moving paper cut-outs of the furniture is much easier on the back than moving the furniture itself. There also is software that can be installed on the computer that enables homeowners to see how furniture will look once arranged.

Now that the time has come to place the furniture, follow these guidelines.

• Coffee tables or ottomans should be set 14 to 18 inches away from the couch. Adjust accordingly to meet the needs of homeowners.

• Televisions should be placed at a distance three-times the size of the screen. However, some of the very-large televisions will simply have to be placed closer. Otherwise they could very well be in the next room.

• The average adult requires 20 inches of breathing room for dining room chairs. Allow an additional 16 inches of room for pushing the chairs out to get up.

• Make sure the edge of a bed is at least 24 inches away from a wall so that sleepers can enter and exit the bed comfortably.

There are some other tips to keep in mind when arranging furniture.

• Consider the safety of young children. Choose furniture that doesn't have sharp edges or temporarily cover these edges.

• Figure out the focal point of the room (a fireplace or picture window) and arrange furniture to complement, not block, this feature.

• Protect floors and walls when moving furniture.

• Enlist the help of strong individuals to move furniture. Don't risk injury by doing it alone.

Equipping the 'man cave'

A room in the house devoted entirely to male interests is becoming much more popular in recent years. The "man cave," as it's come to be called, can shun the decorating style of the rest of the house, and decor may be all the choice of its visionary creator.



Guys who are gaming enthusiasts can outfit their man caves with a pool table and favorite arcade games.

The man's domain is no longer relegated to the garage or a dusty corner in the basement. Today's guys are devoting an entire room to a particular interest of their choice. Some prefer a work-out room with equipment that rivals the nearest gym. Others want to deck-out the room in surround sound and a projection screen to create the ultimate home-theater experience.

According to a recent survey by ServiceMagic, a business that connects homeowners with contractors, about 40 percent of respondents said that they have a man cave or room in their home and another 13 percent said the male domain is in the works.

Steps to ensure plans go smoothly:

• Create the theme. This is a chance for the man to dream up any design style he prefers. Maybe the walls will be covered in sports memorabilia. Perhaps he desires a dark, solitary space. The room can also be a mix and match of any style, as long as it's the desire of the guy.

• Tech it out. Chances are the focal point of the man cave will be a big-screen television. If budget allows, go for the biggest and best TV with all the peripheral equipment. If budget is a bit more modest, shop around for a deal and see what can be picked up from swap Web sites or online bidding sites. Also, check out the classified section of the newspaper to find local deals.

• Furnish the place. The cornerstone piece of furniture could be a large leather sectional to fit many guy friends. Or, if the man cave is to be a solitary spot, a comfortable recliner. Remember to also include a small refrigerator for refreshments.

• Lock it up. For those who want to keep the man cave off-limits, install a lock to keep unwanted visitors out.

• Enjoy the space. The man cave is a place where guys can kick back and relax and do what they prefer – something that may be off limits in the rest of the house.

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Word on the Street

Have you ever considered putting solar panels on your house? *Why or why not?*

Research from TD Canada Trust suggests one in three homeowners have considered installing solar panels; however, three-quarters of them (76 per cent) say the expense is the number-one deterrent.

Of the respondents who would consider installing rooftop solar panels, more than 20 per cent said they didn't know what to do or where to start when undertaking such a project.



Leslie Johnson, farmer and dairy educator for Dundas County, has thought about putting solar panels on her Chesterville-area house. However, she said the roof appears to be too steep. "We have thought about putting it on the barn, but it is expensive," she added.



"I would probably install geothermal before I install solar," said Shawn Funk. He added that it's tough to retrofit an existing building to accommodate solar panels. It would be easier to start from scratch and incorporate solar into a new home.



Cheryl Beasley explained that she has already looked into solar panels due to "ridiculous" electricity costs of her Winchester home. "Actually, I thought about it this month, when my hydro bill was $537 for two months," she recalled.



"We've looked into it," said Vivienne Rice. "The initial cost is way too much."



Joan Davis is thinking about incorporating solar energy into her home, but is unsure how to proceed. "I haven't looked into the cost yet," she said. "I don't know that much about it."



Winchester Home Hardware owner Ken Boje has considered putting solar panels both on his house and his business. "There's a big upfront cost," he noted. He pointed out that you will get a return on your investment, eventually, but you have to get your head around the immediate cost. It's also more challenging to retrofit an existing structure. "If I was to build a new building, it would be a no-brainer," he said.

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Making a home handicap accessible

Many households across the country and around the globe must alter their homes to accommodate a handicapped resident. Homeowners need to address a number of areas throughout their homes to ensure a disabled or handicapped resident can get around safely and soundly.

Doorways

Doorways throughout the home should be widened to allow for wheelchair and walker access. The standard wheelchair is between 24 and 27 inches wide, but contractors recommend making doorways at least 32 inches wide to allow for more room and manoeuvrability.

The existing door unit will likely need to be removed, and the framed opening will need to be widened. While this isn't necessary for every doorway in the home, it should be done at all entry ways, bathrooms and the disabled person's bedroom. In addition, any areas the disabled person will need to access, including the laundry room or a doorway to the patio, will need to be widened.

Bathtub

Transferring from a wheelchair to a bathtub can prove very difficult. At the very least, bathtub and shower grab bars will need to be installed. Replacing the bathtub with a shower is also something homeowners should consider when making a home more handicap accessible. Disabled persons often find it difficult to lift themselves out of a bathtub. Tub transfer seats allow disabled persons to sit in the tub or shower while bathing without having to lower themselves into the tub or lift themselves out afterward.

Toilets

The toilet will also need to be altered or replaced to accommodate a disabled resident. Toilet seat heights will vary depending on the individual, but raised seats can be installed to avoid replacing a toilet entirely, which should only be necessary if the toilet is especially old and poses a danger to disabled residents.

Homeowners should also install grab bars near the toilet to make it easier for disabled persons to sit down, stand up and transfer to and from their wheelchairs.

Sinks

Disabled persons in wheelchairs often find it difficult to reach faucets on sinks that have vanity cabinets below the sink. Pedestal sinks increase maneuverability but also tend to be a little higher. When installing pedestal sinks or hiring a contractor to do so, order lower sinks to make it easier for disabled persons to reach the faucets.

Closets

Standard closets also tend to be less accommodating to disabled persons. For instance, walk-in closet doorways are typically 24 inches wide. Widen doors to the same width (ideally 32 inches) as doors in the rest of the home.

When working on the closets, lower shelves and rods to make it easier for disabled persons to reach their clothing. In addition, be sure the light switch is as accessible as possible.

How to make stairs safer

Many household injuries are attributed to falls down stairs. Even a simple slip can result in a sprained or fractured ankle or another broken bone. Young children and the elderly may be especially vulnerable when it comes to staircase injuries. There are ways to help prevent the scores of accidents attributed to stairs.

• Make sure stairs are clear of clutter. Any item left on the stairs is a tripping hazard, whether that be an errant sock or one of the kid's toy cars. There should be nothing on the stairs that hinders a person's ability to go up and down safely.

• Make sure the stairs are well-lit. Ample illumination can make it easier to see the stairs and prevent shadows from forming. Feel free to increase the wattage of bulbs used over staircases. If visibility continues to be a problem, as may be the case with basement steps, put a strip of reflective tape on the edge of the steps.

• Make sure railings are secure – and used. Falls can be avoided by holding on to sturdy railings.

• Make sure stairs aren't slippery. Non-slip runners or other attachments can prevent falls from slippery stairs.

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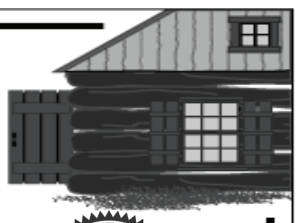
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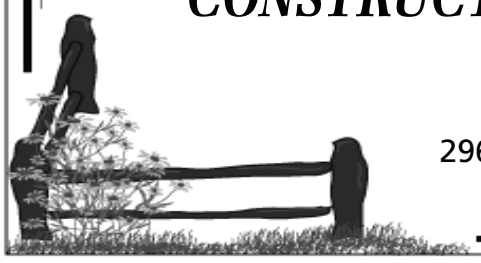
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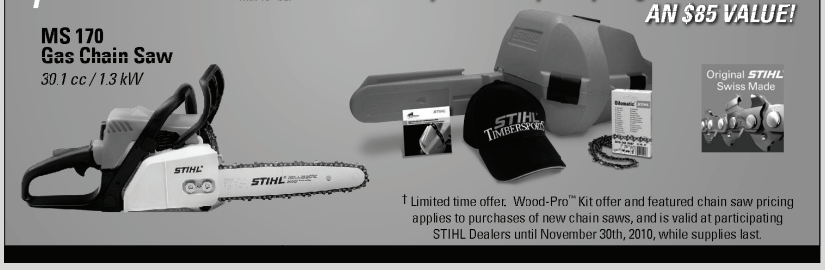
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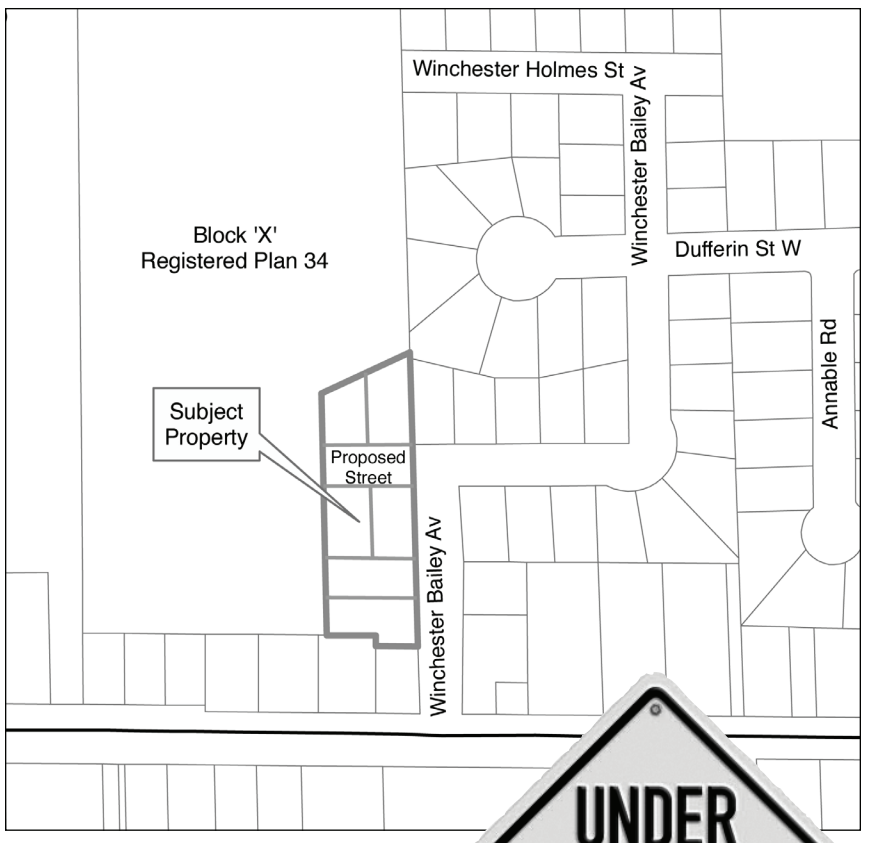

Winfields subdivision moving along

One of the newest subdivisions in Winchester is progressing.

Winfields, located along Bailey Avenue, is currently under construction.

Township of North Dundas council received an update on Winfields during the last regular council meeting on Tues., Oct. 12.

"All the paperwork is pretty much complete," township planner Calvin Pol told the *Winchester Press.*

The territory has a total of 11.93 acres, but the developers plan to build houses on roughly two acres right now, including a new road to access the property.

The first phase includes eight dwelling units on six lots. (Two of the residences are "semi-detached" -- in other words, one house separated into two dwelling units with a wall.)

The developers held an open house earlier this month on Sat., Oct. 2.

Safe solution for pool deck

Pebble-Flex a popular home improvement product

Funtastic Pool and Spa is now selling and installing Pebble-Flex safety surface.

"Safety is growing to be the number one thing on people's minds," said Trevor Carruthers of Funtastic Pool and Spa. Pebble-Flex is known to be the number one safety surfacing agent on the market, being used in the U.S. for over 15 years. Surfacing your pool deck or playground with Pebble-Flex will help lift that worry off your mind, while giving you a long lasting bright future for your pool deck or walkway. Recreation departments, school boards, water parks, etcetera can clean up their parks and have less worry of injury.

Pebble-Flex is a breakthrough soft thermoplastic rubber system made up of small colourful pebble-like particles, which doesn't degrade, fade, or chalk in sunlight or from strong chemicals, chlorine, or cleaners. It is a soft and skid-resistant safety surface ideal for pool areas, playgrounds, and water parks. It is also ideal for resurfacing damaged concrete and interlock pool decks, patios, and walkways.

Pebble-Flex comes in 13 standard colours, and Funtastic Pool and Spa offers custom colour-matching services to help the surface match an existing space. The vibrant colours complement playgrounds and pools nicely. Logos and designs can be incorporated into the surface as well. Because the pebbles are resistant to UV rays, the colour and designs won't fade. Pebble-Flex is easy to clean with a pressure washer and standard cleaning materials.

Pebble-Flex bonds to most surfaces and can be applied over interlock, wood, metal, or fibreglass as reliably as over concrete. With Pebble-Flex, damaged surfaces can look like new again without any demolition needed. Once the surface is installed, it can be repaired in minutes and it won't crack. Being thermoplastic urethane, it expands and contracts instead of giving way.

Pebble-Flex is an international company distributing its systems from California to Australia and has an impressive roster of satisfied customers. Pebble-Flex can be found on Disney Cruise ships, water parks, locker rooms, playgrounds, splash parks, walking tracks, and hotels across the world. Pebble-Flex is a certified member of the National Recreation and Parks Association and of the National Playground Contractors Association.

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Autumn leaf clean-up

The autumn foliage can be beautiful to admire. However, once the trees are past their peak and begin to drop their leaves, autumn can mean lots of yard work for homeowners.

A mature tree can have more than 200,000 leaves, most of which will fall to the ground when the cooler weather arrives. Multiply that amount by the number of trees on the property, and one can see what a task removing leaves can be.



Come the cooler weather, leaf removal becomes a chore for homeowners. Learn the ways to make the work go more smoothly.

Depending on the size of a person's property, leaf removal can be an all-day project. However, when done right, one ensures the lawn underneath the leaves continues to thrive and will be in a better position to ride out the winter.

For most, a human-powered rake is the best tool for removing leaves. While blowers might seem quicker, they can simply disperse the leaves instead of congregate them for easier disposal. What's more, blowers can be noisy and distribute fuel emissions into the air.

It is important to rake deep enough to disturb the thatch or dried up grass and other debris that can form in the lawn. This helps prevent the lawn from suffocation or discoloration.

Leaves can be gathered and packed into biodegradeable bags and brought to the local recycling center. They also can be broken down and used in compost. Leaves on their own do not make ideal organic material, so it's best if they're mixed into a compost pile to generate that "black gold" plants love.

If there are not many leaves on the property, a lawnmower can be pushed over the leaves to break them up into food for the lawn. However, large quantities of leaves should be raked and removed.

Why do windows sweat?

When cooler weather arrives, homeowners often face a troublesome condition. Condensation forms on windows and can be a nuisance or even cause damage to the surrounding trim. There are reasons why sweating windows occur. Knowing the causes is the key to fixing the situation.

When air gets warm it expands and is able to absorb water. When the air cools, eventually it gets to the point where the water is released in the form of condensation. As a result, when warm, moist air from inside the home comes in contact with cold windows, it releases the condensation on the windows. The opposite can occur in the warmer months, when outdoor air condenses on windows because of an air-conditioned interior.



Warm, moist interior air meeting up with cold air from outside can cause window sweating.

There are many activities that put moisture in the air, including breathing, showering and cooking. Removing excess moisture from the home can help reduce condensation and window sweating.

• Be sure that windowless bathrooms have an exhaust vent that will vent air outdoors. Bathroom doors also should have enough of a gap on the bottom of the door to let air inside the bathroom.

• Gas appliances, such as fireplaces, should be properly vented.

• Opt for cooking methods that do not produce steam.

• Lower the thermostat so that the home is cooler, ideally between 62 to 68 degrees F.

• Check if the clothes dryer is properly vented outdoors.

• Consider running a dehumidifier if moisture is a problem not easily remedied.

• Think about replacement windows. Insulated windows that feature double or triple panes will be more insulated, preventing the warm air in the home from meeting the cold air of outdoors. Also avoid metal window frames, as such frames tend to conduct the cold and can further exacerbate sweating issues.

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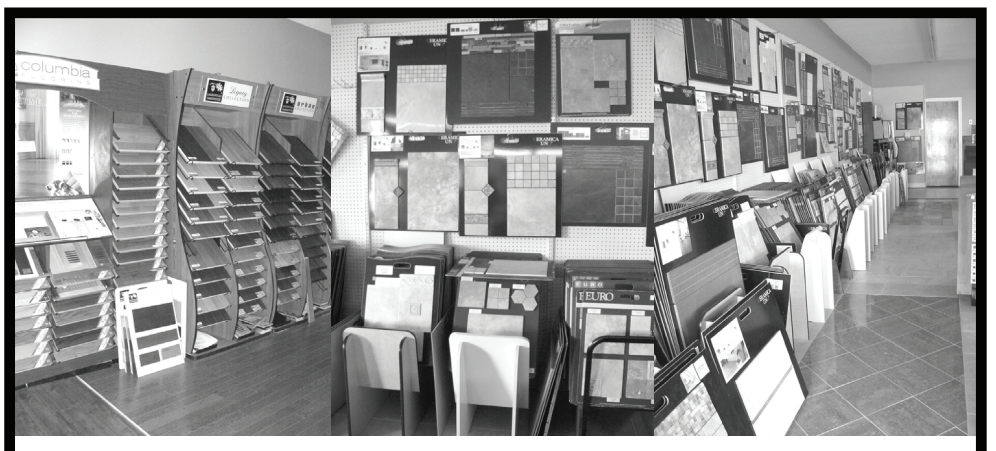
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Ceiling fans can work for you

It would seem the ceiling fan is the bane of a designer's existence, especially if one lends credence to television's slew of interior designers. When such designers prepare to overhaul a room, the ceiling fan is often the first item to go.

Although there are certainly ceiling fans that aren't the ideal decorating centerpiece, are they all an eyesore? Most people would agree not. Plus, ceiling fans can provide an invaluable service in the home; they can help moderate a room's temperature whether it is winter or summer and use less energy for heating and cooling.



Sleeker, more attractive ceiling fans enable homeowners to benefit from energy savings and still have a well-designed room.

Whether homeowners love or hate ceiling fans, there are ways to develop a relationship of compromise with the whirling wonder. Consider these design tips for working with fans.

• Explore the different fan options. Ceiling fan designs of today are not what they used to be. For those installing or replacing a ceiling fan, choose a sleek style that matches the wood trims in the home. Or consider a fan that simply fades into the background and is not a focal point at all.

• Swap out the bulbs and shades. Part of what makes many ceiling fans unsightly are the bulbs and coverings on the bulbs. These may be floral or frosted glass. Generally country in style, ceiling fans clash with many homeowners' styles. One can purchase replacement bulbs and shades if the goal is to simply make the fan look better without a major replacement.

• Blades and brass. Many homes are outfitted with ceiling fans reminiscent of the 1980s. That means they could be full of brass accents and blades that feature designs or inlaid bamboo patchwork. Whatever the case, these looks do not blend in with today's more upscale styles. Disassemble the fan, replacing the blades and simply spray painting the hardware to cover up the gaudiness of brass.

• Loud and proud. If it's the noise generated from the ceiling fan that is more of a nuisance than its look, it may be time to replace the fan. There could be a mechanical problem or the ceiling fan might be coated with accumulated dust. The fan should not detract from a person's quality of life.

• Dangling eyesore. The pull chains for a ceiling fan can be distracting and unsightly. Many fans now come with remote controls, eliminating the need for pull strings. Also, a homeowner can consider eliminating existing strings and simply use a light switch to control the fan.

Making a jack-o'-lantern last longer

Jack-o'-lanterns are a staple of Halloween decorations. Making one last throughout the season is a trick of the trade even some veteran carvers struggle with.



People young and old head to pumpkin patches to pick out the ideal pumpkins. Some prefer perfectly round ones, while others like tall, oblong ones. Whatever the decision, the majority of these pumpkins will be brought home and turned into jack-o'-lanterns, or pumpkins carved with a design.

The key to having a jack-o'-lantern ready and prime for Halloween haunting is carving it at the right time. Carved pumpkins will not last forever, so timing it right is key. In general, carved pumpkins will last for about a week if kept in a cool place and out of direct sunlight. A pumpkin left in midday sun and heat will likely rot or mold much more quickly.

For those planning on carving pumpkins for Halloween, it's best to do so a day or two before the big day. This way the design will be crisp and fresh.

There also are ways to increase the jack-o'-lantern's longevity.

Some of the best methods involve inhibiting mold growth and dehydration of the pumpkin. One trick is to submerge the cut pumpkin in a bucket of water for a few minutes after carving to moisten the flesh. Others say that spreading petroleum jelly on the inside of the carved pumpkin will help. Commercial chemical products that reduce the decay of the pumpkin may be effective as well. One can also try using a bleach-and-water solution to keep mold from growing.

Those who will simply allow nature to take its course should keep the pumpkin as cool as possible and remove as much of the flesh from the inside when carving. However, because no method is foolproof, the jack-o'-lantern will most likely not make it more than a week, unless the goal is to discover new strains of mold growth.

For those who want a permanently ghoulish jack-o'-lantern, it's best to purchase a plastic or ceramic variety.

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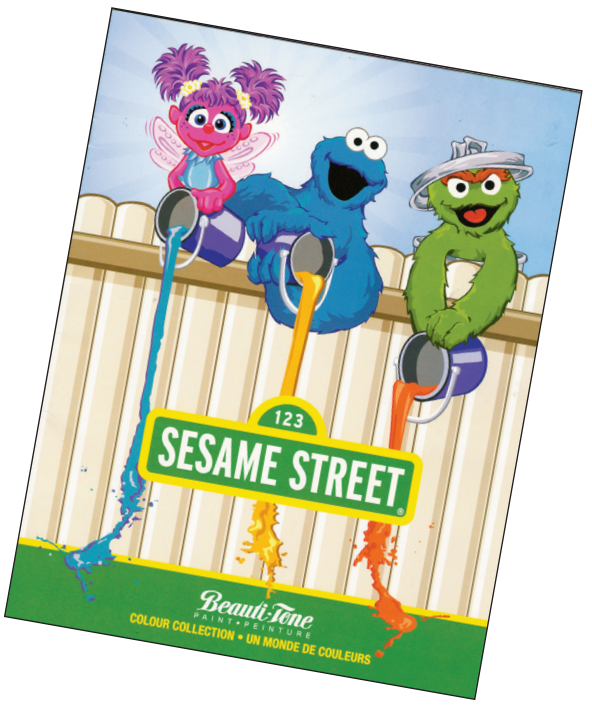


Designer PAINTS

The next big trend in home design

WINCHESTER – Forget brand-name clothes, sunglasses, and even jewellery. Branding is stretching to new and unexpected markets, limited only by imagination and creativity.

There's even designer paint.

In fact, this fall, Winchester Home Hardware is stocking tones from Canadian fashion designer Simon Chang, as well as Sesame Street.

The idea is, customers can design a room inspired by the brand paints, and use the hues as a basis to build a creative living space, with the shades as the primary inspirations.

Home Hardware has entered into agreements with the brands through its own line, Beauti-Tone Paint. Pamphlets detailing what a creator can do with their rooms are available to spark the imagination at Winchester Home Hardware.

For example, if a youngster is a huge Cookie Monster fan, there's a line of paints modelled on (and compatible with) the blue hues of the beloved character himself. There are six colours in the Cookie Monster line, including the near-periwinkle "Cookie Jar," to the royal blue "Um Num Num Num," to the custard yellow "C is for Cookie" (christened, of course, in honour monster's hit single of the same name).

"It's designed in those kids' type of colours," explained Ken Boje, owner of Winchester Home Hardware.

If your child loves pink, a room modelled on Sesame Street newcomer Abby Cadabby may be suited to her tastes. The rosy "Make Believe" might be paired with the darker pink "That's So Magic," creating the perfect colour combo to complement a cute white single bed and some hearts stencilled on the wall. But of course, the design of the room is really up to the customer. (Or perhaps the customer's child.)

Big Bird, Bert and Ernie, Elmo, and Oscar the Grouch also feature in the Sesame Street brochure at Winchester Home Hardware.

What about the grown-ups? They may be more interested in the Simon Chang line. With the background in photography and graphic design, Chang has brought his love of detail and design to all his creations, from clothing to his paint colour collection.

Boje noted that there are many palettes through the Simon Chang Trend Colour Collection.

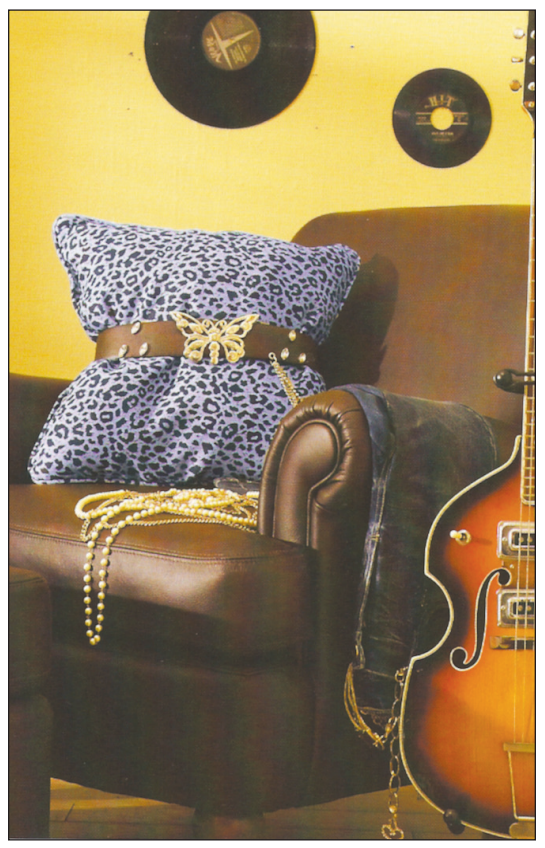
"He has come up with these colours, which are exclusive to Home Hardware," explained Boje. "It's fashion-oriented."

Depending on their tastes, customers may opt for the bold shades, inspired by Chang's international travels, under the Global Welcoming palette (such as the teal "Greek Mosaic" or light yellow "Dutch Tulips") or the vibrant Cool Rush In group (which includes colours whose names say it all, like Halogen Yellow and Scream Green). The remaining palettes include the moderate Classic Awakening, the trend-proof Fashion Essentials, and the blue-and-yellow based Rock & Bold.



Ceiling colour: *Sesame Street's "All You Need is Trash"*
Wall colour: *Sesame Street's "Stinky Shoes"*





Wall colour: Simon Chang's "I got You Beige"



Ken Boje, owner of Winchester Home Hardware, is pictured here with one of the SpaBerry hot tubs. *Press Photo — Smith-Millar*

Hot tubs: a small(er) luxury

Hot tubs are like pets. Many of us long to have one, but cringe at the thought of the maintenance, expense, and energy that go hand-in-hand with the responsibility.

Boje hopes the SpaBerry product line will appeal to homeowners who aren't keen on having, say, a six-seater hot tub, or who wouldn't have that kind of space anyway.

The SpaBerry line is designed for two people, and comes in five colours.

"There's a trend of people going towards the smaller hot tubs," said Boje. "There's been quite a bit of interest in it."

From personal experience, Boje knows that a big hot tub is popular when you first bring it into the house, but its use may decrease over time.

"The novelty wears off," he said with a grin. A solution, he explained, is to have a smaller tub like the SpaBerry that can be plugged directly into the wall – and unplugged, too. That means the Spaberry is easier on the hydro bills.

"It's much easier to look after," Boje said. "You just plug them into a regular outlet... It's fully insulated."

SpaBerry uses an award-winning, eco-friendly water conditioning product called BerryPure, which produces softer water and reduces the amount of expensive and harmful chemicals normally used in a spas. The product aims to reduce the irritating side effects like burning eyes, dry skin and hair, and sanitizer odours. Plus, Berry Pure is 100 per cent biodegradable – once you replace it, you can recycle the old BerryPure moss filter in a garden.

Boje said he has the SpaBerry on an introductory "$500 off" special for the next period of time, at $3,667.57, down from $4167. The two popular colours of slate grey and very berry red are in stock. And fitting with the product's theme, the tubs also come gift-wrapped with a bow on top, saving you the wrapping if you want to make it a Christmas gift.

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How to avoid DIY project injuries

Tough economic times call for even tougher measures – and for many homeowners this means getting hands-on with home improvement projects. Although DIY projects can save money in theory, they also may result in a trip to the hospital if safety precautions aren't followed.

According to recent statistics, 85 percent of homeowners are tackling projects around the house rather than hiring outside contractors. In this difficult economy, emergency rooms are seeing an influx of people coming in with injuries ranging from lacerations to puncture wounds from nail guns.

John and Jane Do-It-Yourselfer has easy access to home-improvement supplies and tools at the local home center. He or she also may be inspired by any of the myriad shows on television instructing individuals to give renovations a try. However, many homeowners are not schooled in proper safety procedures or do not know how to use tools correctly. This is a recipe for injury.



When working on the home, homeowners should always err on the side of caution to reduce their risk of injury.

Common injuries include

- falls from ladders or scaffolding
- hand and finger injuries – including amputation – from power saws and grinder/sanders
- nail gun injuries; since 1991, these injuries have increased by 200 percent
- eye injuries and breathing difficulties

Safety first

Homeowners should consider the risks of improvements before beginning. They should also take precautions to do improvements in the safest manner possible.

- Always read the manufacturers' safety information and usage guidelines for any tools before the are put to use.
- Turn off electrical current to rooms and outlets prior to doing any electrical repairs.
- Wear proper safety equipment, including goggles, dust masks or respirators, boots, and gloves.
- Store chemicals in a locked cabinet or on a high shelf out of reach of children and pets.
- Be cautious of power cords. Always unplug tools and turn off the switches when the item is not in use.
- Do not climb past the top rung of ladders. Do not use furniture or stacked items as a ladder.
- Jobs such as electrical work, roof work, gas projects, or major plumbing issues are better left to a skilled contractor.
- Make sure drill bits and saw blades are sharp. Dull tools can result in injuries.
- Keep fire extinguishers and a good first aid kit readily available at all times.

There is no cost savings that make risking a disability worth it. If a project is beyond an individual's scope of ability, hire a professional instead.

Conquer clutter for good

Clutter has a funny way of creeping up on a person. It starts with a few papers piling up on the counter. After awhile, closets and cabinets are packed with stuff rarely used. Homeowners can tame the clutter by following a few steps.

For many people the accumulation of belongings is a status symbol. Many believe that the more stuff they have – the more successful and well off they are. They have to have the latest video game systems, books, magazines, electronic gizmos, etc. After a while – and when interest wanes in these things – the items begin to collect dust.

Breaking the connection with belongings is one of the first steps to clearing out clutter. Here are some other steps to take.

- Make friends with the garbage pail. One of the easiest ways to get rid of clutter is to simply get rid of it. If an item hasn't been used in two years, and it can't be recycled, or is not suitable for donation, throw it out.
- Have a yard sale. For individuals who have the gumption and devotion to organize and sell items, then have a yard sale. One man's trash is another man's treasure. This can be a fast way to clear clutter and make a few dollars in the process. Placing classified ads in local newspapers is a good way to get rid of larger, more expensive articles.
- Freebie offer. There are enterprising individuals who are just looking for no- or low-cost items to collect, and probably add to their own clutter. Set items that will not be used at the curb and there's a good chance they will be gone before the next garbage pickup. Ask friends and family members if they have a need for certain items that can be given away.
- Donate. There are plenty of less-fortunate people who can benefit from another person's excess. If there is baby clothes and gear that may be stored in an attic, find out if it can be donated to a women's shelter or a daycare center. Perhaps a halfway house can use electronics, older appliances, tools, and other things that have been accumulating in the garage. Be reasonable about clothing in the closet. If it doesn't fit now, give it away. Should one lose weight at a later time, it will be fun to purchase smaller clothing.
- Organizational systems can help. There are all sorts of products, from closet systems to storage bins, that can help organize belongings. Simply culling through items and storing them in designated bins or on shelves can significantly reduce a mess.
- Rotate closets. Free up space in closets by storing out-of-season clothes and shoes in the attic. Once the weather changes, then swap the wardrobe. This easily alleviates space concerns.
- Put things where they belong. Laziness often leads to clutter. That's because people tend to drop things in drawers or areas where items don't belong as a quick fix. Not only does this make finding things more difficult, it may contribute to purchasing doubles of things already owned. Take the time to put things where they belong and alleviate a mess in the process.

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Small projects add up to big appeal

In this economy, homeowners are watching every penny. Just because money is tight doesn't mean every renovation plan has to be cast aside. Smaller projects can revitalize a room without a big investment.

Homeowners who don't have much to spend still don't want to compromise quality with smaller improvements. Therefore, they're often thinking of big appeal, albeit on a smaller scale.

To get started, homeowners should look at the rooms they use the most and begin there. What's the point of starting in a guest room or renovating the basement if it's rarely used? Put available funds to work on the rooms that get seen.

For example, the kitchen is a popular room in many homes. If budget doesn't allow for a overhaul of appliances or cabinetry, think about less expensive ways to modify the space. A new faucet can give the room a different look, as can replacing cabinet hardware and hinges. Revitalize the appearance of the room with new flooring, such as laminate that mimics the look of stone, wood or other natural surfaces. Change the accessories in a china hutch or hang some different artwork for an instant change.

Bathroom makeovers are often high on the list of improvements. But many improvements can be budget-busters. Think about improvements that change what is disliked. Maybe outdated wallpaper can be removed and replaced with paint. Clean up the grout around a bathtub by redoing it to freshen the room. Go with a new color scheme achieved by replacing the old linens, bath mat and shower curtain.

Living room re-dos can be achieved with some accessory changes and perhaps a new piece of furniture. Change a glass coffee table for an earthy leather ottoman that can also store toys or throw pillows. A simple swap of window treatments can dramatically change the look of the room. If seating has seen better days – but a new set is not an option – form-fitted slipcovers are a quick, and generally low-cost, fix.

Kids' rooms often can be improved with some much-needed storage space. Clear up clutter from the floor by installing a closet organizing system, which can hang clothes within reach for children. Older children may appreciate a room that reflects their maturity. Now is the time to change princess prints for bolder graphics or dump trucks for sophistication. All it often takes is a little paint and some new bed linens to achieve the look.

For a dramatic change in a home with hardwood floors being hidden by carpeting, take the weekend to pull up the carpeting and reveal the floors beneath. A little sanding and resealing is often all it takes to bring out the beauty of the wood. And that will instantly provide value while increasing aesthetic appeal.

Another simple and very inexpensive way to renovate a home is to reduce. By removing clutter and items that are simply collecting dust, homeowners can breathe new life into spaces. Rearranging furniture is also another option.

Convert that empty nest

Homeowners who have spent many years in one home likely raised a family and shared many memories inside of those walls. When the kids grow and move on it can be somewhat bittersweet. Being left with vacated rooms – especially ones still decked out in children's decor – can cause the house to feel more empty than it has to be. Now is the time to turn those empty rooms into adult spaces.



Once the kids have left home for good, homeowners often look to convert rooms once devoted to the kids into something more in tune with the needs of an adult.

Homeowners shouldn't feel guilty about taking down band posters and packing away Little League baseball caps. Chances are the children made good use of their rooms and now it's time for the adults to reclaim the spaces for their very own.

There are easy ways to turn children's bedrooms into spaces adults can enjoy. With a few fixes, the room can be a man's space, a woman's retreat, or a room both can enjoy.

Because the room will reflect the adult homeowners' interests, it should be designed with their needs in mind. Comfortable furniture and items that please the residents should be incorporated.

Lighting should be used to set the mood. If the room will be used for television watching, have dimmer switches so that the brightness can be tuned down. For reading or office work, have overhead lights and task lighting, such as a desk lamp.

For the "man cave" the room can reflect interests, such as sports or fishing, but be decorated in a subtle way to complement the rest of the home's decor. For example, if a guy likes a sports team, he can paint the walls in a subdued shade of the team colors instead of hanging pennants or player jerseys on the walls.

Homeowners should remember to include extra seating and space so that they can entertain friends or family in their newly adapted specialized rooms.

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Eliminating painting odors

Painting a room can give it a face lift in a day. While painting can have many appealing benefits, one of the project's pitfalls is the odor left behind. This can leave homeowners wondering how to reduce paint smells in the home.



The advancements of paint have led to many varieties of low-odor paints. However, even the most low-odor of the bunch will have some residual smell. What's more, homeowners retrofitting spaces that are older or who have used oil-based paints in the past may need to use a more potent paint to cover dark colors, block water infiltration or simply adhere to previous paint applications. These stronger paints tend to be more potent.

There are some steps homeowners can take when paint fumes are bound to overwhelm, particularly in a child's bedroom.

1. Empty the entire room of furniture and any porous materials that can trap paint fumes. This also will make it easier to paint with no obstructions.

2. Open the windows in the room before any paint cans are opened, and keep them open during the duration of the job.

3. Consider the use of latex paints, which are generally low-odor.

4. If alkyd, alcohol, or shellac paints must be used, add a few drops of vanilla extract to the paint to alleviate any odors. It won't affect the color of application.

5. Wait until the walls have fully dried before closing windows and returning the furniture to the room.

6. Promptly close paint cans and gather materials used for cleaning and removal from the room. Store them in a sealed container to prevent odors from spreading throughout the house.

7. If odors are persistent, placing a bowl of cut up onions in water in the room is an old trick that may or may not work. The onions supposedly absorb the paint odors, sometimes in as little as one day. This is an inexpensive idea to try.

Interior fixes to sell a home fast

Real estate experts call it "staging," or presenting the home in the best light so that potential buyers can envision themselves moving right in. Just a few changes here and there can position a home to sell faster than the competition.

The nose knows

A house can be perfect inside and out, but if it smells bad, buyers will likely be put off. Make sure there is no noticeable odor, such as pet smells, garbage, stale smoke, etc., to turn off others.

Clear out

Make sure the interior looks as spacious as possible. This could mean taking out some furniture and temporarily putting it in storage. Be sure countertops in bathrooms and kitchens are free of clutter. And pack away knick-knacks that can collect dust.

Cater to the lazy person

Potential buyers generally want to move in and simply unpack. They don't want to make major repairs. Therefore, homeowners should do whatever repairs are possible, within reason. Tearing down dated wallpaper could mean a faster sale.

Do a deep cleaning

Whether a cleaning service is hired or the homeowner does it himself, tackling necessary cleaning projects could make the home shine. Now is the time to wash the windows, shampoo the carpets, re-grout the bathrooms, and tackle all of those messes that could compromise a sale.

Add a fresh coat of paint

If walls are bright colors or eclectic, it could pay to paint rooms in more neutral shades to appeal to the masses. Just be aware that some buyers are suspicious of paint, especially freshly painted ceilings. They may think a homeowner is trying to hide something, usually water stains.

Keep the home updated

While one doesn't have to follow every trend, ensuring the home is ageless can make for a better sell. So if the cabinets scream 1985 and the bathroom is circa 1967, it could be time to do some updating.

Create "happy" spaces

Buyers don't want to purchase a dark home that seems full of doom and gloom. Open the windows, turn on the lights, add lights to dark rooms and use light colors as room accents. Generally buyers want a bright and light home.

Avoid provocation

One potential buyer could be an animal lover, another a political activist. No one can tell who will view the home. So don't display personal items that might offend. Take down mounted deer heads and put away books that may seem offensive.

Clean out closets and cabinets

Partially empty closets and cabinets give the suggestion that the home is large and has plenty of storage space. Buyers who see jam-packed closets could wonder what's up with storage.

Hang pictures the professional way

Dressing up rooms is easily achieved by hanging artwork on the walls. However, hanging them at the right height, ensuring they're straight and avoiding errant holes in the walls can prove more challenging than many would like to admit.

Some people hang pictures at the wrong height. Others miss the stud in the wall and have to keep trying over and over to get the picture to stay vertical. There are some tips to follow that cut down on needless work and make the process a bit easier.

Using templates is one of the easiest ways to hang pictures. Simply trace the outside of the frame onto a piece of paper or cardboard for each picture that will be hung. Then use a tape that isn't very tacky to temporarily hang the templates on the wall. Play with placement so that an idea of layout and the finished product can be realized. This is particularly helpful if multiple framed photos or artwork will be displayed.

This method enables homeowners to step back and view the entire picture, instead of having one hand on the picture frame while eyeballing placement. Plus, it eliminates the need to punch holes into the wall only to find the frame is not placed where one desires.

After the placement is finalized, hang the actual frames, one by one, removing the templates in the process.

Another key tip to remember is that it isn't essential that a wall beam is tapped into when hanging a picture on the wall. While homeowners should certainly attempt to locate a beam when hanging heavy items, sometimes the stud doesn't fall where it will be aesthetically pleasing to hang the frame. In such instances, expandable wall anchors can provide more stability. There are different anchors available depending on need. Some are plastic and can be pushed into a hole in the drywall. Once a screw is used in the anchor, the anchor will fan out and grab onto the backside of the drywall. Metal anchors may be spring-loaded and provide even more strength.

Some other pointers to keep in mind

- Try grouping four pictures together in a square or rectangle to create the illusion of one larger picture.
- Always hang pictures at eye-level.
- When hanging a picture or artwork over the sofa, only leave a few inches so the picture is the focal point.
- Keep scale in mind. Don't place one small picture on a large wall. Conversely, don't put a large picture on a small wall.
- Consider the use of similarly hued picture frames or ones all of the same style to lend a cohesive look to the photo arrangements.
- When hanging art over a piece of furniture, it should not be longer than the width of the furniture.
- Pull colors from the furniture and other decor so that photos or artwork coordinate with the design style.
- Think about illuminating the artwork. An upward or downward facing spotlight can make the picture pop in the room.
- Use an art shelf to display photos and other knick-knacks. It will take up less space on the wall and can offer a contemporary feel to the room.
- Pictures can be hung diagonally going up a staircase or anywhere there is a natural progression of height.
- Hanging pictures vertically gives an air of refinement and looks good next to a doorway.

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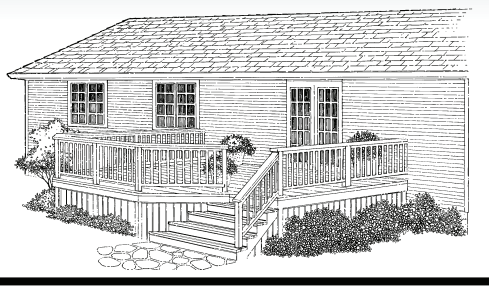



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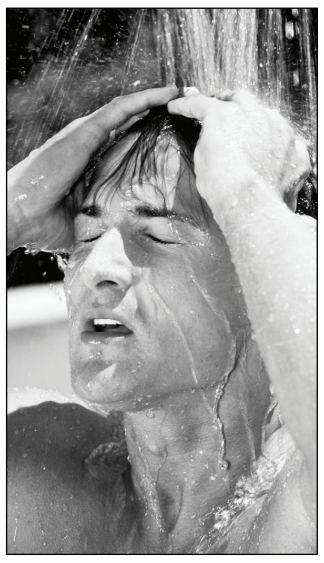
There are many reasons for low water pressure. Diagnosing the problem is the key to fixing it. Here are some causes to consider.

• Rural areas that rely on well water may have less pounds of water pressure than in towns.

• Water softeners or filters in homes can reduce water pressure.

• Multi-level homes could experience a drop in water pressure in upstairs bathrooms. That's because, for every 2.31 feet of vertical climb in a water line, a homeowner will lose a pound of water pressure. Water that originates in the basement and must travel upstairs could decrease by 12 pounds of pressure by the time it arrives at a third-floor bathroom.



Shower enjoyment can be impeded if water pressure isn't up to par.

• Clogged pipes or fixtures can reduce water pressure. Pipes that are also too small in diameter to meet the house water needs could also be to blame.

• Water restrictors in showerheads and other fixtures can reduce water flow in an effort to conserve the natural resource.

Homeowners can insert a gauge at the main water supply of the house to determine the pressure of the water at the source. This will help determine if the problem lies outside of the home or inside.

Some water pressure issues have easy fixes. Simply cleaning the screen on faucets or showerheads can remove debris and improve water flow. Purchasing fixtures that do not additionally restrict water flow can also alleviate the problem.

Individuals who live in rural areas or at the end of city water systems may want to consider the addition of a water pressure tank that will provide extra water supply in high-demand situations. While it won't improve water pressure, it will alleviate water volume problems when in need. A booster pump installed on a system will actually increase water pressure by several pounds. Homeowners may have to contend with fluctuating water pressure, but it may be a small price to pay for extra water pressure.

Some homes have various valves installed in the plumbing system so that a leak or problem can be isolated and turned off. However, the wrong types of valves can impede water pressure.

It can be well worth the expense to have a professional plumber to investigate home water pressure issues and recommend solutions. It may be simpler than one thinks.



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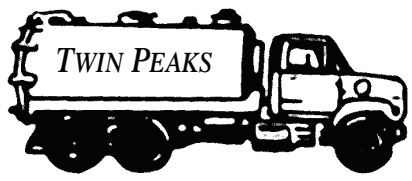

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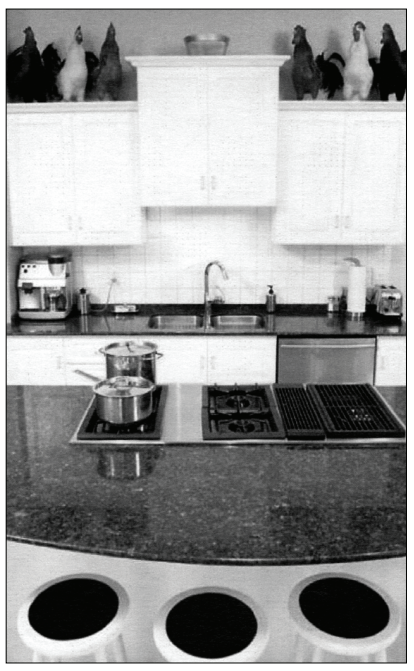

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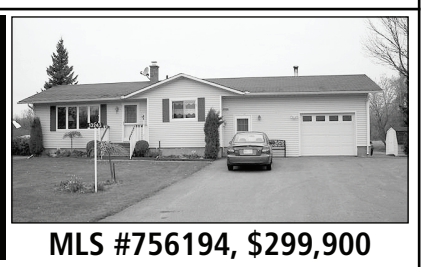

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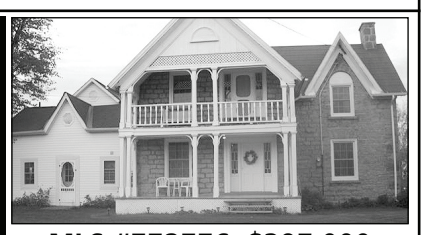

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Fall 2010

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A home is more than a place to keep your stuff

We have all heard the old adage that a house is nothing but "a place to keep your stuff." Most homeowners believe that their house is so much more than that. A home is where we live. It's where we sleep, shower, read, play, and relax. Some people work from their homes. Sometimes, a home can be an investment, purchased in the hopes of making a profit. However, just because a home is one of the biggest purchases you will make in your lifetime doesn't mean that it's always a good idea to treat a home as an investment with quick returns. The cable TV channels are fond of shows where people "flip" homes – buy them cheaply, fix them up nicely and sell them off at a profit – but in the real world that kind of quick profit isn't always a sure thing.

As the real estate market moves toward balance in Ottawa and the surrounding regions, homeowners may begin to worry that their homes aren't appreciating in value as quickly as they once were, and that so-called "bidding wars" (multiple offers) are becoming less common occurrences. This is only cause for concern if you absolutely have to sell your home in the next little while. If, like many homeowners, you bought your home because you love it, it suits your family's needs, and it provides you with somewhere to sleep, eat, relax and keep your stuff, then there's no need to panic.

Home values in the Ottawa area have historically increased at a steady pace as the years go by. Since 1956, the average sale price on homes sold via Ottawa's MLSR system has only decreased five times, and never by more than 4.3 per cent (way back in 1961). Average home prices increased by somewhere between two and eight per cent in 32 of those 54 years, which gives you a much better idea of how the Ottawa area housing market generally operates. Slow and steady growth is our hallmark here, bolstered by a stable employment market whose backbone is the federal government, but that also is not dependent on industry for its stability.

Double-digit average price increases, on the other hand, are rare, occurring in only ten of the last 54 years. History has shown that over the long term, prices will generally rise in the Ottawa region, so housing remains a great long-term investment - but it may not be the best market for a quick flip.

If you do need to sell after a shorter time period, call us. We are a group of experienced real estate professionals who know the local market and can help you sell. We can also advise you on up-and-coming neighbourhoods where a home may be more likely to appreciate in value over the short term.

Buying a home you can live in and enjoy for the long haul is never a bad idea, and will likely turn out to be a good investment. Plus, it gives you somewhere to keep your stuff.

The President's Pen column was prepared by the Ottawa Real Estate Board and first appeared in the 2010-09-02 issue of the EMC community newspapers and was modified for this publication.

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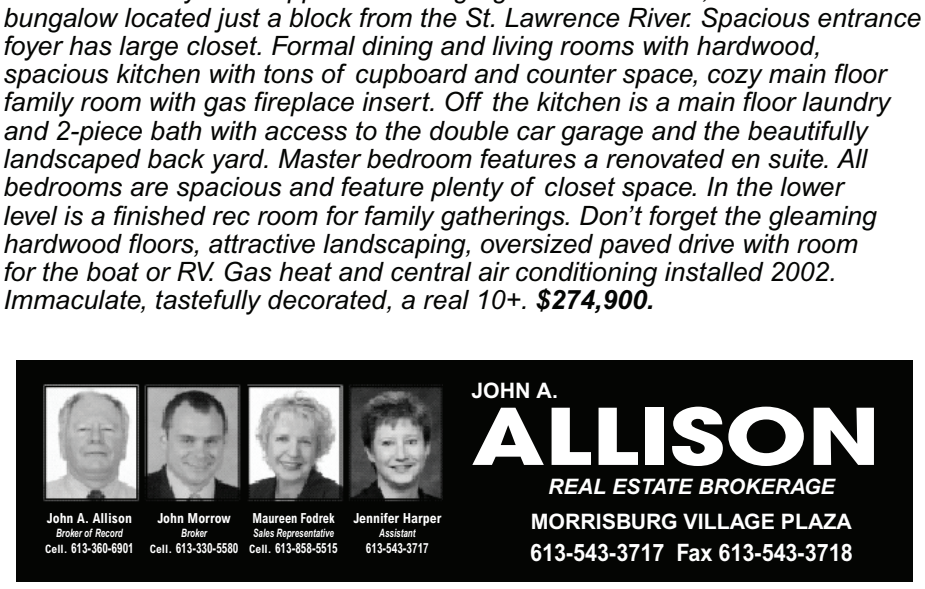
Fall 2010



2,000 sq. ft. executive bungalow
1 Merkley Street, Morrisburg

The fussiest buyer will appreciate this gorgeous 3-bedroom, 2.5 bath bungalow located just a block from the St. Lawrence River. Spacious entrance foyer has large closet. Formal dining and living rooms with hardwood, spacious kitchen with tons of cupboard and counter space, cozy main floor family room with gas fireplace insert. Off the kitchen is a main floor laundry and 2-piece bath with access to the double car garage and the beautifully landscaped back yard. Master bedroom features a renovated en suite. All bedrooms are spacious and feature plenty of closet space. In the lower level is a finished rec room for family gatherings. Don't forget the gleaming hardwood floors, attractive landscaping, oversized paved drive with room for the boat or RV. Gas heat and central air conditioning installed 2002. Immaculate, tastefully decorated, a real 10+. ***$274,900.***





Privacy and beauty

WILLIAMSBURG: Stunning three-bedroom bungalow features an open concept living area with kitchen island, ceramic floors, sunken living room, and comfortable flowing floor plan. This ideal family lot offers privacy, space and beauty from the landscaping to the above ground pool and cedar deck. The basement is finished including a huge rec room and laundry/storage/ utility area. This home is a pleasure to show and would be a dream to own. Take a look today! **$239,000**



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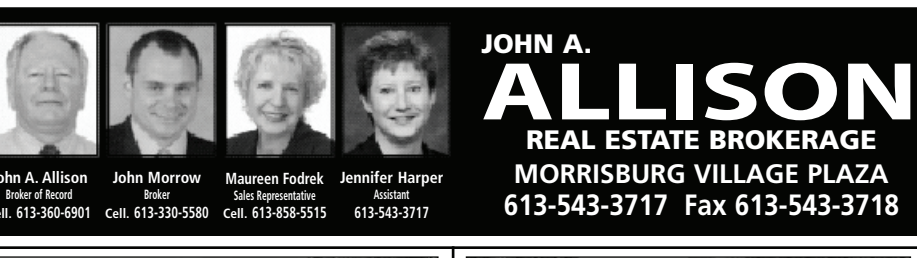



12264 Strader Road, Glen Becker - Tree-lined driveway leads to beautiful, classic farm house and 63 acres, perfect for the hobby farmer. The house has been lovingly updated and retains its classic charm including original tin and tongue-and-groove ceilings, door and wood trim. Updated kitchen and bath. Main-floor laundry. Three bedrooms + 1.5 baths. Wood floors. Attached granny flat features living room, bedroom and bath and shares the kitchen with the main house. Detached garage/workshop with loft area; barn; a stunning, classic home that you won't be able to resist. **$269,000.**



23 Westwinds Dr., Morrisburg - Attractive raised bungalow has plenty of curb appeal. Three-bedroom, 2-bath home features fully finished basement; rec room with woodburning fireplace; gas heat and central a/c; patio doors in the dining room lead to attractive back deck, private yard, and above-ground pool. All the important things have been updated, including roof, windows, and doors in 2008. This solid home is located in a great west-end neighbourhood and is within walking distance to schools, river, shopping, and recreation. Excellent family home just waiting for a new family. **$182,900.**



13039 Riverside Dr., Riverside Heights - Charming 1.5 storey home has far more room that you'd imagine! There is a main-floor master bedroom plus 2 more on the second level; main-level den/office could be a fourth bedroom. This home has gleaming hardwood floors throughout and refinished wood trim. Tastefully decorated, expansive yard with perennial beds, huge detached garage/workshop with metal roof for the "toys". Updates includes new windows in the front entry porch, water softener system, generator transfer switch, Venmar Air Exchange system, shingles and much more. **$171,000.**



22 Caldwell Dr., Iroquois - Attractive 2-storey home with fabulous front porch is only 4 years old. Three bedrooms,1.5 baths, main-floor family room and large lower-level rec room. Located close to ball diamonds, schools, shopping. Attached double garage, paved drive, large back yard. High quality laminate flooring with minimal carpeting. Gorgeous oak staircase to second floor plus oak kitchen. Master bedroom has large walk-in closet and cheater door to main bath. This home has been very tastefully decorated. Gas heat, central a/c. There is literally nothing to be done except move in. **$247,900.**

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MORRISBURG AREA: This bungalow backs on a government sanctuary. Ceramic floors in kitchen and entry, hardwood in the living room which also offers patio doors and large windows overlooking the rear deck, back yard and the sanctuary. Sip your coffee and watch the wildlife, or enjoy your full-wall stone woodburning fireplace. Other features include a wood-burning fireplace insert in the basement, built-in dishwasher and paved drive. Upgrades include some windows and flooring, shingles (8 years old). Owners have outgrown this one, take a look and make an offer. **$169,000**



WILLIAMSBURG AREA: What a great lot! Super location only 45 minutes to Ottawa (Bank & Hunt Club). This home offers very comfortable living space, near endless counter space, main-floor laundry room, recently re-shingled roof and replacement windows. Located in a small hamlet just east of County Road 31 (Bank Street South), about halfway between Winchester and Morrisburg, you can enjoy peaceful country living on over 1 acre and be a short commute to wherever you need to be. This home could be available with a short closing. The seller says sell and has priced accordingly, don't wait, call for your appointment today. **$139,000**



MORRISBURG: A truly magnificent home! Incredible open family, kitchen and dining rooms. Patio doors to deck and pool, large lot, paved drive, beautifully landscaped with interlock, landscape stone and fabulous flower gardens. The pride of these owners shows inside as well as outside. Generous-sized rooms, tastefully decorated, await your inspection. This home offers central vacuum and air, air exchanger, gas heat, 2 gas fireplaces, water treatment and more. **$299,500**



MORRISBURG: Check this list! Three bedrooms, downstairs recreation room, paved drive, great yard, double garage (30' x 24') located on a quiet crescent with a park nearby. Upgrades include all windows and metal roofing. Attractive brick exterior and mature trees in the back give this home great curb appeal. **$160,000**

Get the info on new listings fast! Contact us today and start viewing from home tomorrow.

MORRISBURG: Bigger than you'd think, 2 + 1 bedroom bungalow has been nicely updated. High ceilings. Dining room patio doors to private back deck. Nicely enlarged kitchen makes room for additional dining and deck access. Laundry in basement. Large private lot. Very nice neighbourhood, only a short walk to the river. **$149,000**



MORRISBURG: Extensively upgraded triple brick classic. One of the original homes in the village, this comfortable 3-bedroom home offers a third-floor recreation room and separate main-floor den/office so everyone has some space of their own. The eat-in kitchen is a must see, beautifully done! Private rear deck and yard. Fully wired and insulated shop/garage. Upgrades include electric, plumbing, heating, windows, doors, flooring, cabinets and more. This property is steps away from the dock of the St. Lawrence River and is one of the most picturesque areas in the Village of Morrisburg. Convenience and charm, this home offers the best of both worlds. Make arrangements for your viewing today!! **$198,500**

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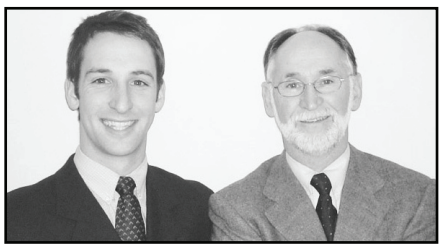

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WINCHESTER: 2 bedrooms with finished basement, updated furnace, shingles & more. $188,500 MLS 771003



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WINCHESTER: 9 month old 3-bedroom, 2-bath bungalow is move-in ready! $312,500 MLS 771718



Winchester: Charming 3-bedroom with garage, updated windows & metal roof! $147,500 MLS 768372



Winchester: 1,600+ sq. ft. 2-storey home with fresh paint & flooring. $239,900 MLS 770207



RURAL WINCHESTER: Classic renovated farm-house with in-law suite and 40x100 shop! $485,000 MLS 760839



MOREWOOD: Cute 3-bedroom home. Perfect for first time buyers! $139,900 MLS 771129



WINCHESTER AIRPORT: 40+ acres, multiple buildings, gorgeous 3-bedroom home. Multi-use. $499,900 MLS 751646



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MARIONVILLE: 2+1 bedroom bungalow on 23+ wooded acres with fenced rear yard. $349,900 MLS 769835



SOUTH MOUNTAIN: Renovated 3-bedroom with pine floors & lots of character. Great value. $164,900 MLS 767740



SOUTH MOUNTAIN: 3-bedroom with screened in porch, attached garage, & walkout basement! $199,900 MLS 769389



SOUTH MOUNTAIN: 44+ acres of grassy fields, creek, 3+1 bedrooms, and a 2.5 car garage. $324,900 MLS 771008



WILLIAMSBURG: 3-bedroom bungalow with large side & rear deck on 1/2 acre. $174,900 MLS 757385



WILLIAMSBURG: Updated farmhouse with loft-like master bedroom & huge country kitchen. $149,900 MLS 771358



WILLIAMSBURG: 75+ acres of land, 3-bedroom, 2-bath house and 100 x 40 barn. WOW! $339,900 MLS 770184



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Lannin Lumber gears up for spring grand opening

New Home Building Centre brand boosts business: owner





J.D. VanNoy says the Home Hardware brand is reliable and well marketed.

It's a long process, but Lannin Lumber Mart has taken the major steps toward evolving into a Home Building Centre – and an official celebration is on the horizon.

Since becoming a Home Hardware store more than a year ago, Lannin's has slowly transformed, starting with the classic red, yellow, and white exterior and interior Home Hardware signage, higher shelves, wider aisles, and more products.

"We plan on doing a grand opening in the spring," said owner J.D. Van Noy.

While there are still plenty of improvements and products to come – such as vinyl and steel siding offered in the upstairs section – the major steps in the re-branding process are finished.

"The worst of all the stuff has been done," said Van Noy with a grin.

Lannin's Home Building Centre carries lumber, plumbing and electrical materials, and building supplies. It has started to offer more hardware, too.

Van Noy agreed that adopting the Home Hardware branding was a good move.

"It makes doing business on a day-to-day basis much easier," said Van Noy. "Business has definitely improved. It really does work."

In 1945, Van Noy's grandfather, Harold Lannin, purchased the M.F. Beach Company and sold building materials while operating a truss plant, moulding mill, kiln, and feed store. Van Noy continued working at the shop after his parents took over in the 1970s. Today, he continues in his family's footsteps as third-generation owner.

The best part of adopting the Home Hardware brand, Van Noy said, is easy access to a wide variety of products. There's no minimum amounts of stock, which allows Van Noy to easily accommodate customers' special or unusual orders. There's also weekly deliveries from Home Hardware warehouses, and if a customer wants something fast, a quick-shipping option is available.

A huge benefit is Home Hardware's slick national advertising campaigns, not to mention the widely circulated catalogues that draw customers to all Home stores.

"I think [Home Hardware] has a consistent brand," Van Noy said. "It's known coast to coast."

He explained that Home Hardware owners have the freedom to stock the merchandise they want. For example, Lannin's continues to carry Pittsburgh Paints – a product that has appeared on the store's shelves for decades – as well as the Home Hardware brand Beauti-Tone. The variety has drastically improved paint sales, Van Noy explained: "Now that we have both lines, [sales have] really increased."

Head office also conducts rigorous market research and keeps on top of the ever-evolving products and techniques.

"Our industry just changes so much," Van Noy said.

The jump in business has allowed Van Noy to hire one more staff member so far. (Plus, the hours have already been extended on Saturdays, when Lannin's used to be open from 8 am to noon but now closes at 2 pm)

Van Noy said Lannin's will continue to offer new items and adapt as customer requests and suggestions come in.

"We're focusing really on the needs of what people in the area want," he said.

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A group of six Habitat for Humanity Seaway Valley chapter volunteers helped every step of the way during the home's construction. However, the turnout was lower than the Morgans and the local chapter were expecting.



The Morgan family consists of Lisa (left), Mark, Hannah, and Kaine.

After the move

Morgan family reflects on Habitat for Humanity experience

by Matthew Uhrig

The process was long, and quite trying at times, but now that it's over, one local family has finally got a place they can call home.

The Morgans – Mark, Lisa, Hannah, and Kaine – were the recipients of the Habitat for Humanity home built in Winchester by the Seaway Valley chapter of the non-profit, faith-based organization.

The process began in September 2009 when, after going through a thorough application process, the family was informed they would be the recipients.

"My mom jumped up and down [when she found out]," said Kaine, bursting with excitement.

Lisa explained that when the call first came in, the family was told to keep the information "hush, hush," until the other families that had been shortlisted were told of Habitat's decision.

"After the phone call, Kaine came into the kitchen, and I picked him up and swung him around in my arms," she said.

From that moment forward, it was a whirlwind of emotions for each family member as they came to terms with the news that would surely shift their lives for the better.

"The tension is non-existent now," said Lisa. "It was high pressure at first, but now we can relax."

Mark echoed his wife's statements.

"I'm able to breathe now," he said. "I get up in the morning more relaxed than ever before."

Daunting task

The family's journey began in 2001 when Mark's job in the Ottawa tech sector was eliminated after the fallout from the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City.

From then on, Mark bounced around from job to job, with the lack of stability causing the family to sell their home and move in with relatives.

Throughout the process of living with extended family, the tension of that number of people under one roof grew to be nearly unbearable at certain points in time. Both Mark and Lisa agreed that the love of family members was always there, but the personality differences were continuous factors.

"It's been a real roller-coaster ride for this family," said Mark. "Throughout the job hunting, and trying to keep the bills paid, the tension was pretty thick. The families get along, just not under the same roof."

Making progress

After getting what the Morgans agreed was the "call of a lifetime," the family met with a number of Habitat committee members during various home visits. Habitat for Humanity rated each shortlisted family with a point system to generate a clear depiction of actual need.

"After that, the board goes through, and chooses the family," said Lisa. "We don't know any of the procedures."

On a quiet Tuesday evening in September 2009, the Morgans met with Habitat representatives, Township of North Dundas council members, and the local media at Mary's Restaurant in Winchester to sign an official contract to be the newest owners of a home built by the Seaway Valley chapter. (North Dundas donated the land to Habitat.)

The family then had to complete what Habitat calls "sweat equity hours," 500 in total, at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Bonville.

In March 2009, the Morgans, along with the same members of township council, Stormont, Dundas, and South Glengarry MP Guy Lauzon, and his wife Frances, who is the local chapter's vice-chair and treasurer, welcomed community residents to the lot at 12175 County Road 3 for the official groundbreaking ceremony.



Construction crews poured the concrete for the home's foundation in late May.

From that point on, there was a delay of several weeks between the time the hole for the foundation was dug, the foundation slab was poured, and the construction of the remaining parts of the home.

"But once it got going, it went up quick," said Mark.

Through the process, however, there was disappointment shared by both the Morgans and Habitat representatives. After about 40 people showed up to the pre-build safety course, only a handful of volunteers arrived when it was time to build.

"Habitat told us that was the biggest disappointment," said Mark.

Lisa explained that most days she would have to call upon family members to help, otherwise the required work would fall further and further behind.

"We had a very dedicated crew of six people," said Lisa.

In the end, Habitat had to hire professionals to come and finish some of the more labour intensive work that the small group of volunteers couldn't do on their own.

"Everything turned out really well," said Lisa, adding that she has now learned how to install drywall and vapour barrier, and lay hardwood flooring, which she and Mark did together.

Home sweet home

Throughout early June to the beginning of August, the home was worked on little by little each day, until finally, on Sat., Aug. 28, it was ready to be unveiled to the public during an open house session.

The Morgans moved in just a few days before, which left very little time to prepare. But, Lisa said, they made it through the best they could, putting in a lot of hours of unpacking and rearranging.

The split entry home, with three bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen, and living room, is now home to a family that for the last few years went through uncertainty, but all agree that they are stronger for it.

"There's still minor things that need to be done, but this is definitely home now," said Lisa.

The Habitat for Humanity Seaway Valley chapter will be at it again in spring 2011. The Township of South Dundas donated property on Schell Street in Williamsburg, which will soon be the home to the White family – Troy, Amy, Jacob, Savannah, and Sophia.

Keep watching the *Winchester Press* as more details emerge.



My foray into do-it-yourself furniture repair

by Amanda Smith-Millar

Like many female twentysomethings, I recently reached a moment of truth.

It was time to look in the mirror – or more literally, the closet – and acknowledge that I have a problem.

I own too many clothes.

I swore it would never happen to me. Never. Especially considering that only a few years ago, I went on a slightly crazy "anti-stuff" mission to purge my living environment of all unnecessary items. Half of what I owned went to a favourite charity, the House of Lazarus. As loved ones shook their heads in amusement, I shed posters, figurines, electronics, shoes, books I never intended to read again – and of course, unwanted clothes.

It's that last category which confuses us girls so much. Clothing: necessity or luxury? Dr. Maslow's hierarchy of needs says it's the former. But is there room at the bottom of his pyramid for a rainbow of identical Twik blouses from Simons in Montreal? Or summer shorts from Giant Tiger in all available plaid colour schemes? Or most tempting of all, seven pairs of jeans from Rideau Auctions at 50 per cent off their already drastically reduced ticketed price?

Of course! Self-actualization is in reach!

Despite writing a column about my reformed pack rat ways in a Home Improvement supplement a while back, it appears I've fallen off the wagon. Clothes continue to be a girlie weakness. My poor closet. By the end of this past summer, all available storage space was occupied, and nice stuff was being stored in cardboard boxes.

The House of Lazarus got the snub this time, though. I pledged to keep my pretty clothes, minimalism be darned. Thus, I stepped off my soapbox and registered with the online classified site Kijiji, where in short order I was able to find a set of two used lightweight dressers with wicker drawers that a young mum was offering for $100.

Unfortunately, the tops were damaged. Scratched during a move, as I learned through a conversation via e-mail. But the seller said they could easily be sanded and refinished.

My practical woodworking experience was limited to making a shallow bowl and crooked shelf in middle-school shop class. But I figured, why not give real home improvement a try?



Before: All scratched up.

Step 1: Creating a workshop

Miraculously, my little orange Hyundai Accent was able to accommodate both dressers. The seller and I settled on a discount – $80 for the set – and loaded the pair for the journey from Kanata to the *Winchester Press* office.

We have many talented staffers here at 545 St. Lawrence. I soon learned that besides their graphic design skills, at least two of my colleagues are self-taught home improvement types. Both Linda and Nancy have re-finished furniture and other such impressive things. I benefitted not only from my colleagues' expertise, but their supplies, too: varnish, screwdrivers, blue rubber work gloves, and a stain so close to the dressers' original colour, it was amazing. (They also put up with having two half-finished dressers in the back room of our working environment for a while.)



Despite the expression, I'm really happy, due to the automatic sander! A marvellous invention indeed.

Step 2: Sanding

I went to Winchester Home Hardware and bought sanding sponges for a couple bucks. The idea was, I'd sand the veneer to even out the gouges, and then conceal the exposed wood with a stain.



A sanding sponge.

Despite considerable elbow grease, the plan didn't work. The surface looked inconsistent and awful after being stained with a rag.

Nancy took pity on me, and the next day, an electric sander appeared at the *Press* office. This time, I sanded down the finish until the surface was exposed evenly throughout.



Stain coat number two, drying in the sun.

Step 3: Staining

Two coats of stain later, the surface is really looking good!



Applying the varnish.

Step 4: Varnish

And now, for the gloss. I got some advice from staff at Winchester Home Hardware, who recommended I apply varnish using some (thankfully inexpensive) disposable sponge brushes. They also suggested I use the sanding sponges to even out the surface between the two layers of varnish.

In conclusion...

My little project was faster, and easier, than I expected. Fixing up old furniture is definitely the way to go if you don't mind investing the time. It's also easier if you have the tools handy and someone to guide you through the process.

In the end, I kept one dresser for myself. The other went to my gentleman friend of nine years, whose cramped apartment near McGill University is in desperate need of re-organization. (Or at least this is my opinion.)

I also didn't keep the second dresser because – well, if I don't have the space, I won't buy any more clothes.... Right?

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