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# It's all about you, *Kalamazoo*

Sometimes I stop for a moment and look around at where I am and think about how lucky I am to be back in Michigan, especially in west Michigan. If you've never moved away from the state, you may not understand why I missed winter and why shoveling snow makes me happy.

Life can take you places you never imagined you'd go. For me, it was Houston after college at Michigan Tech. Ok, I did fall in love with Texas and lived there for a couple of decades, but Michigan was always home, and always calling me home. Michigan is home for family, home of four seasons, freshwater, gorgeous beaches and fall colors.

My family and I returned this past summer and found a kind of peace being in the place we knew we were supposed to be. When I take a moment to simply take it all in – the fall colors, the snow, hockey, euchre, the fresh air and the number of amazing local craft beers, people who didn't leave don't completely understand or appreciate being home. They wonder how I could marvel at typical Michigan things. But those of us who have moved away and answered the calling home understand.

Working at the Home Builders Association of Western Michigan makes this all extra special because the HBA is a local organization with the heart of western Michigan beating strong inside. After all, our members specialize in making Michigan homes. We live here, we work here, we play and raise our families here. We build and remodel homes right here.

Members of the HBA care about the people of western Michigan and take great pride in their work. HBA members are your friends and neighbors – people you'll see at the grocery store, church or a hockey game. We understand how important housing is to our local economy and how a house is more than a building – it's a home. HBA members respect that a home is where memories are made and where you'll want to come back to at the end of the day. If you are in the market for a new home, a remodeling project or something that just needs to be repaired, call your friends and neighbors at the HBA of Western Michigan. HBA members are licensed, insured and voluntarily subscribe to the association's strict code of ethics.

The next time you see some guy just standing there and taking it all in, it's likely me. Listening to this pleasant peninsula say, "Welcome Home."

*Jeff Tafel*  
Chief Executive Officer  
Home Builders Association  
of Western Michigan





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# Buffalo Cauliflower Bites

Photography by Linda Hoard

Who would have thought that eating cauliflower could be addicting! Even if you're not crazy about the taste of cauliflower, it takes on the flavor of whatever it's cooked with, so you might just fall in love with these. The almond flour gives it just the right amount of "breading" and the wing sauce gives it a burst of flavor. Throwing the ingredients together using zip-lock bags makes it a snap to make. And of course, it's a perfect dish for vegetarians or people choosing to eat low-carb.

Servings: Serves 8

#### Ingredients:

2 2/3 cups Almond flour  
2 tsp Garlic powder (optional)  
1 tsp Sea salt  
2 large Eggs  
1 large head Cauliflower (cut into florets)  
1 1/3 cup Buffalo sauce  
3/4 cup Butter

Recipe requires two gallon size zip-lock bags.

Preheat the oven to 400F. Line a cookie sheet or 10-inch by 15-inch baking pan with parchment paper or non-stick Silpat baking sheet. Set the pan aside.

Combine half of the dry ingredients in a gallon size zip-lock bag and give it a good shake. Set aside. (If you don't want to do the math, that means 1 1/3 cups of almond flour, 1 tsp garlic powder (if using), and 1/2 tsp of sea salt.)

Whisk one egg in a small bowl and then add it to a second zip-lock bag. Add half of the cauliflower and shake to coat. Make sure all florets are coated.

Add the cauliflower to the bag that has the almond mixture. Seal the bag and shake to coat the cauliflower. Arrange the cauliflower in a single layer on the baking sheet. Repeat with the other half of the ingredients.

Roast in the oven for 25-30 minutes, until tender and slightly browned.

While the cauliflower is roasting, stir together the butter and buffalo sauce over low heat until butter is melted.

When the cauliflower is done, transfer it to a serving bowl. Evenly pour the Buffalo sauce mixture over it, and toss gently to coat, so that the breading stays on.

Serve warm with blue cheese dressing and garnish with green onions if desired.

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## Building Communities and Changing Lives, One Home at a Time

By Brittany Tomaselli

There's a lot to be anxious about when it comes to our homes. While maintenance and repairs are inevitable parts of home ownership, when you actually think about the sheer number of factors that hold together a house, it's amazing the level of quality and safety that we simply take for granted. But when construction defects do occur, it can be a serious nightmare for a homeowner. Since most of us are not building experts, it's crucial that we hire a professional for the job, one that we can trust. A nice advertisement does not necessarily mean a contractor does quality work. So when even a simple home improvement job gone wrong can end up costing you, how can you know who to trust?

This question is precisely what the experts at the Home Builders Association of Western Michigan work everyday to answer for you. Dedicated to both supporting the residential construction industry and making sure our community receives the highest quality homes, the HBA is the area's professional association for members of the housing industry. Jeff Tafel, CEO of the Western Michigan chapter of the HBA, explains their mission is "building homes, building communities, and changing lives." They are an integral part of the community, Jeff says, "Because we are building people's homes, that gives us the opportunity to be a part of the community...we're building where people spend their lives." Thanks to their efforts, when we hire an HBA affiliated professional, we can rest assured they will be held accountable for their work.

### WHO IS THE HBA?

When talking about "home building," we are not just talking about building new homes, but also remodeling homes

and making general repairs. Members of the HBA consist of a wide of variety of professionals who make up the home building industry, from contractors to interior designers. In fact, owning a home pretty much guarantees you will need to hire someone from this industry at some point. Unfortunately, shoddy workmanship is not as uncommon as we would hope. Jeff Tafel says that the HBA receives on average of 2-5 calls per week complaining about substandard practices in the area. However, out of all those complaints, Jeff says only one complaint has been about one of their members. This is because professionals affiliated with the HBA already must comply with the a set of strict standards. To become a member, builders must first be licensed and insured. As Jeff notes, "it's pretty simple to get in, but the expectations for the standards are high once they are approved." Members must consistently abide by the HBA's code of ethics. This code of ethics, available to the public on their website, demands professionalism and honesty from its members. Anybody can file a complaint about substandard practices and the HBA's grievance board will take it seriously. Holding builders accountable prevents faulty homes and building defects, which is vital work for our community. Because of the HBA's regulated standards, we can trust its professionals to construct our homes with the highest degree of quality.

### STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITY

Good homes are a basic necessity for a strong community, and the HBA not only helps to provide this necessity, they also actively involve themselves in relevant local issues. "It's a wonderful thing when the organization's mission aligns with

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other efforts to strengthen the community," says Jeff Tafel. One of the major challenges our local housing industry face are the costs associated with the codes and regulations of developing land. Getting a piece of land developed appropriately so it can be built on in the first place takes up a staggering amount of the cost; The National Home Builders' Association recently did a study and found that 25% of the cost of a new home can be traced back to codes and regulations. Regulations are, of course, important for making sure our homes are safe, so the HBA works with local and state government to make sure the building industry is represented when deciding these regulatory issues, especially ones that have such an impact on our home costs. They are dedicated to advocating for affordable homes that also follow the proper regulations.

Another challenge the HBA actively works to help overcome is the labor shortage, a widespread issue affecting many Michigan industries. To combat the shortage, the HBA is involved in community workforce development initiatives. Jeff Tafel says that with Michigan's high percentage of working poor, it's especially important to "[give] hardworking families an opportunity to have a career path that will bring them above that poverty line." The HBA works with Allegan county's Dual Community Development program as well as with The Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) to get high school students, non-traditional students, or anyone with an interest in changing careers the chance to learn vocational skills. Through a 10 week program, students gain hands-on construction training and leave with a pre-apprenticeship, allowing them to immediately enter the workforce and find gainful employment. Jeff says with this project they hope to "show folks that getting into the skills trade and residential construction is a great career path. You don't have to rack up a bunch of college loans and it pays good money for the rest of your career."

#### BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS

The HBA provides numerous advantages for its builders and home professionals. Not only does being a member provide the opportunity to interact with other professionals, but it can also reduce building costs through savings and discount programs. "Most importantly," Jeff Tafel says, the HBA makes sure that members are kept "up to speed on the newest technology and the newest methods of building." These new technologies help improve factors such as cost efficiency and energy savings. Members have access to numerous educational programs that keep them up to date with these latest standards in building. Becoming a member not only provides a wealth of resources for networking and marketing, it also provides an professional edge and credibility that can't be found anywhere else.

#### USE ITS RESOURCES

It's easy to find the professional you are looking for using our local HBA as a resource. Just head to [www.kalamazoohomepage.com](http://www.kalamazoohomepage.com) and click on their member directory to locate the right business for you. Locating a professional using the HBA guarantees the business is licensed, insured, and that they are going to work on your home with honesty and using the highest standards. It's important to utilize HBA members so that you can rest assured you will end up with a well-made, safe home you can be proud of, while at the same time supporting an organization dedicated to improving our community.



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*Courtesy of Hannapel*

# Specialty windows make a lasting impact on any home

By Barbara Fisher

**W**ho doesn't get a boost from the beauty of natural light spilling into a room? Regardless of the season, windows are our gatekeepers. They guard against too much heat escaping in the winter months and too much heat entering in the summer. They make rooms brighter and appear larger. Purchased with care and quality in mind, they are reliable and energy efficient for many years. And that just covers their functionality and practicality. Windows can add understated class or dramatic touches. They can highlight the architectural elements of your home (or office). They can be creative works of art. Use your imagination as a springboard whether you're looking at new construction, an addition, remodeling or replacement windows.

Says Dave Hannapel, President, Hannapel Kitchen/Bath/Window/Door, "Custom windows are used quite frequently

in replacement projects, to fit existing openings. Special shaped windows can be used in remodeling or new construction to add visual curb appeal to the exterior of the home, or to add special interest to the interior of the home." According to Hannapel, in the broadest of definitions, a custom window is any window that deviates from the sizes listed in a particular product line's catalog. Some product lines are manufactured based on the dimensions (measured in as small as 1/8 inch increments) provided at the time of order and have no "standard" sizes. Hannapel went on to say that "most special shaped windows are available only as a stationary or "fixed" unit, but some are available as an operating window. Most manufacturers have an offering of special shapes in both standard sizes and custom sizes."

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Courtesy of Pella Windows & Doors

Bob Kemp, Director of Operations for Abode Building Center, a specialty home center, notes “a specialty shaped window might be used to accentuate a particular design feature in the house.” A wide variety of composition, color choices, grilles, lites, and trim can make every project a unique architectural and aesthetic statement. Kemp referenced the Kolbe line of specialty windows as being particularly in tune with specialty shapes, colors, corner or folding windows, sustainable wood species and energy efficiency.

Both Kemp and Steve Stanley, Senior Trade Representative with Pella Windows & Doors, highlighted the placement of a specialty shaped trapezoid window in the peak of a vaulted room to let in more light and add both exterior and interior distinction. Here’s where working with a qualified window expert is paramount. Not only is the shape of the trapezoid window one of the more irregular of the geometric shapes (and uniquely suited for this setting), but placement of the window requires mathematical computations and window design due to the exterior and interior pitches where the window will be placed.

Specialty windows can be placed as a single unique unit or as an addition to an existing window, such as adding an arch. Stanley acknowledged a trend toward large custom windows (such as 70 square feet) divided by lites creating the appearance of multiple windows. Kemp noted the tendency toward expansive windows on lakefront property with as much glass as possible to capture the view, effectively blurring the line between indoors and outdoors.

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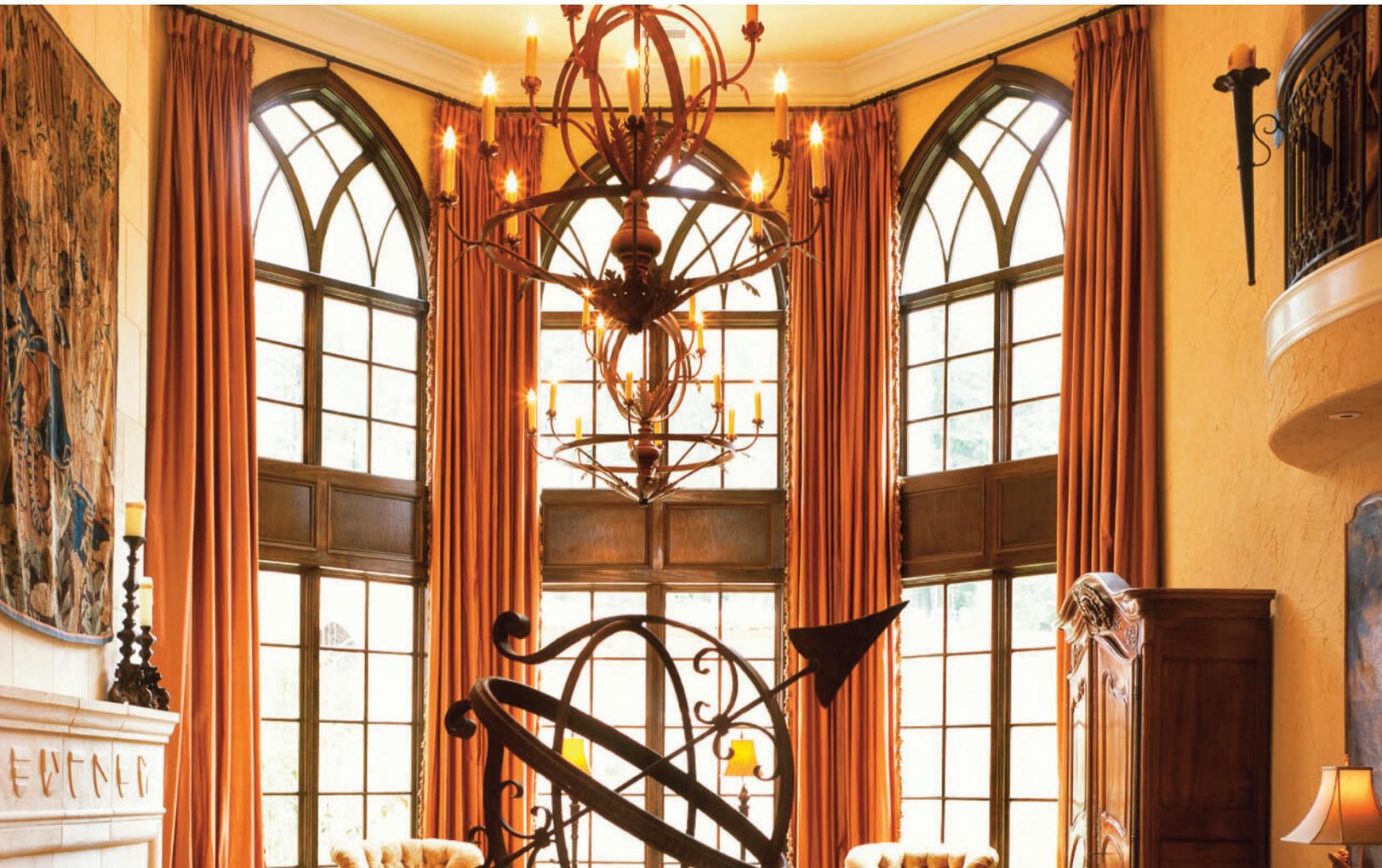
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QUALITY that LASTS



*Courtesy of Abode Building Center*

Scores of options are available to let the light in and create outstanding interior designs. True divided lites, simulated divided lites, muntins, Mullions and grilles? Loosely, they are all terms for the decorative horizontal, vertical (and sometimes geometric) bars that divide windows into smaller panels. Casing, sills, extension jams? That's considered window trim. Then you've got size (keep in mind furniture placement), construction type (wood, fiberglass and vinyl are typically used in residential settings), shape, colors, glass options (even mirrored) and the overall window rating. The overall window rating (a numeric score) is important as it takes into account the entire window: weatherstripping, proper fit of the window sash (the portion that holds the glass) into the frame. Choose from awning, casement, horizontal sliders, single or double hung, bow or bay windows. Are all the windows operating (they open) or fixed (they don't)? What about hardware? Are you looking for a particular appearance from the exterior of the home or from the interior (or both)? Are you overwhelmed yet? Most of us don't possess encyclopedic information and inventories of these sorts of details. Here's where a reputable, qualified and knowledgeable window expert can provide assistance. Some, but not all, reputable design companies are also licensed contractors, able to provide not only design assistance but also construction considerations and perform the actual window installation. A qualified expert can also help you avoid disappointment or making rookie mistakes.

Hannapel and Stanley noted code or neighborhood restrictions, cost estimates, size limitations and window

availability as potentially coming into play. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the options to help you decide what features you want and what is feasible for your project. Find some inspiration by visiting a showroom or two. Today's quality windows (including most custom and special shape windows) are versatile, durable, easy to use and efficient (look for the Energy Star and overall window rating).

Kemp offered that while specialty shaped or true custom windows are distinctive, they do represent a pricier option. Where budgetary constraints or sizing limitations exist, customizing a window is still possible. Add panache with exotic colors, grilles, hardware, or built-in window blinds. Decorative glass can make a unique design statement and can be customized to fit existing window openings. Choose from designs that add artistry, leaded glass patterns or privacy options. And that's just the windows, play with trim surrounding the actual window for specialty accents.

"Anything is possible", Stanley observed. Whether it's the creation of a single focal window or a style to use throughout your home, make your next window project a work of art.



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Tickets are also available at area Harding's locations for \$8 and online at [www.KalamazooHomeExpo.com](http://www.KalamazooHomeExpo.com)

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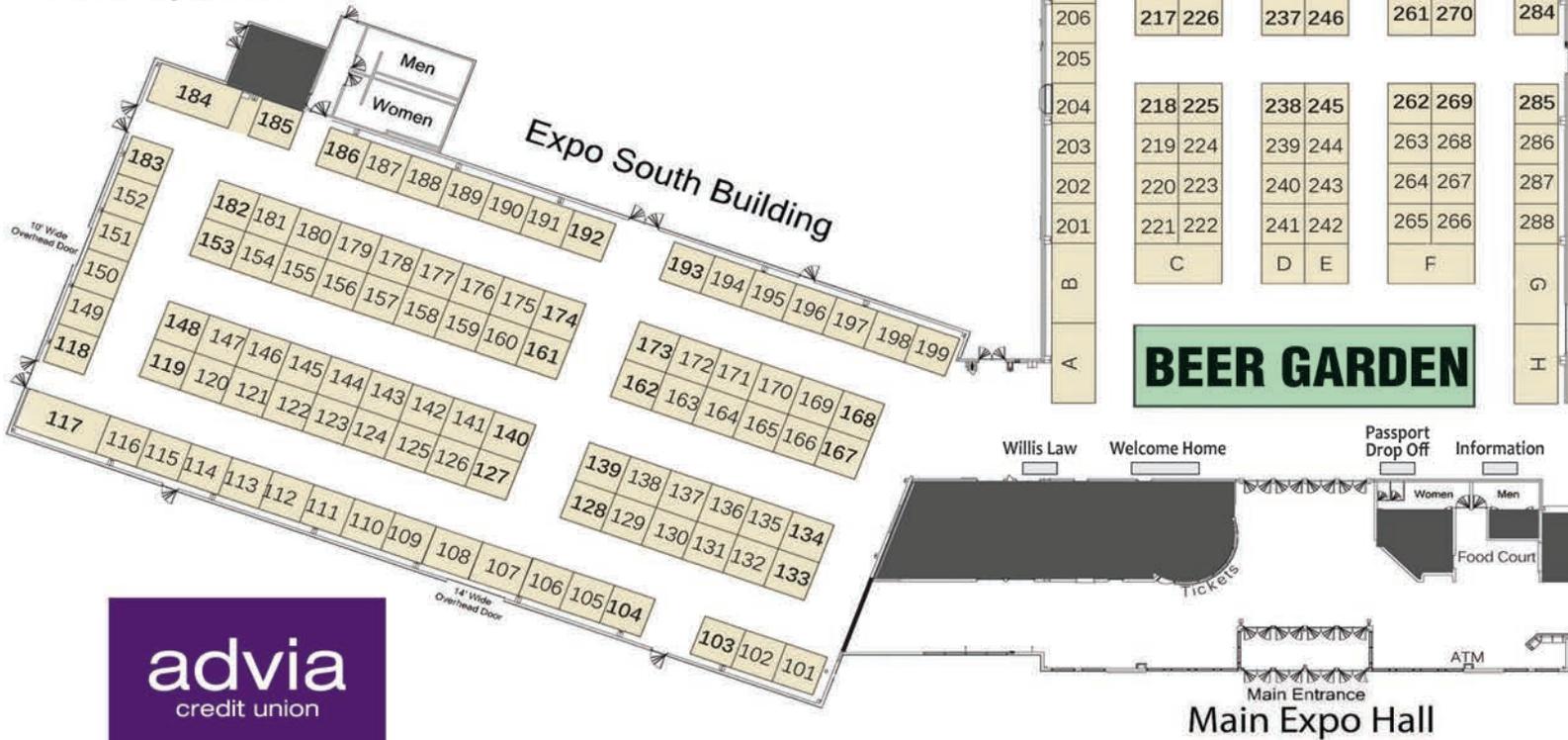
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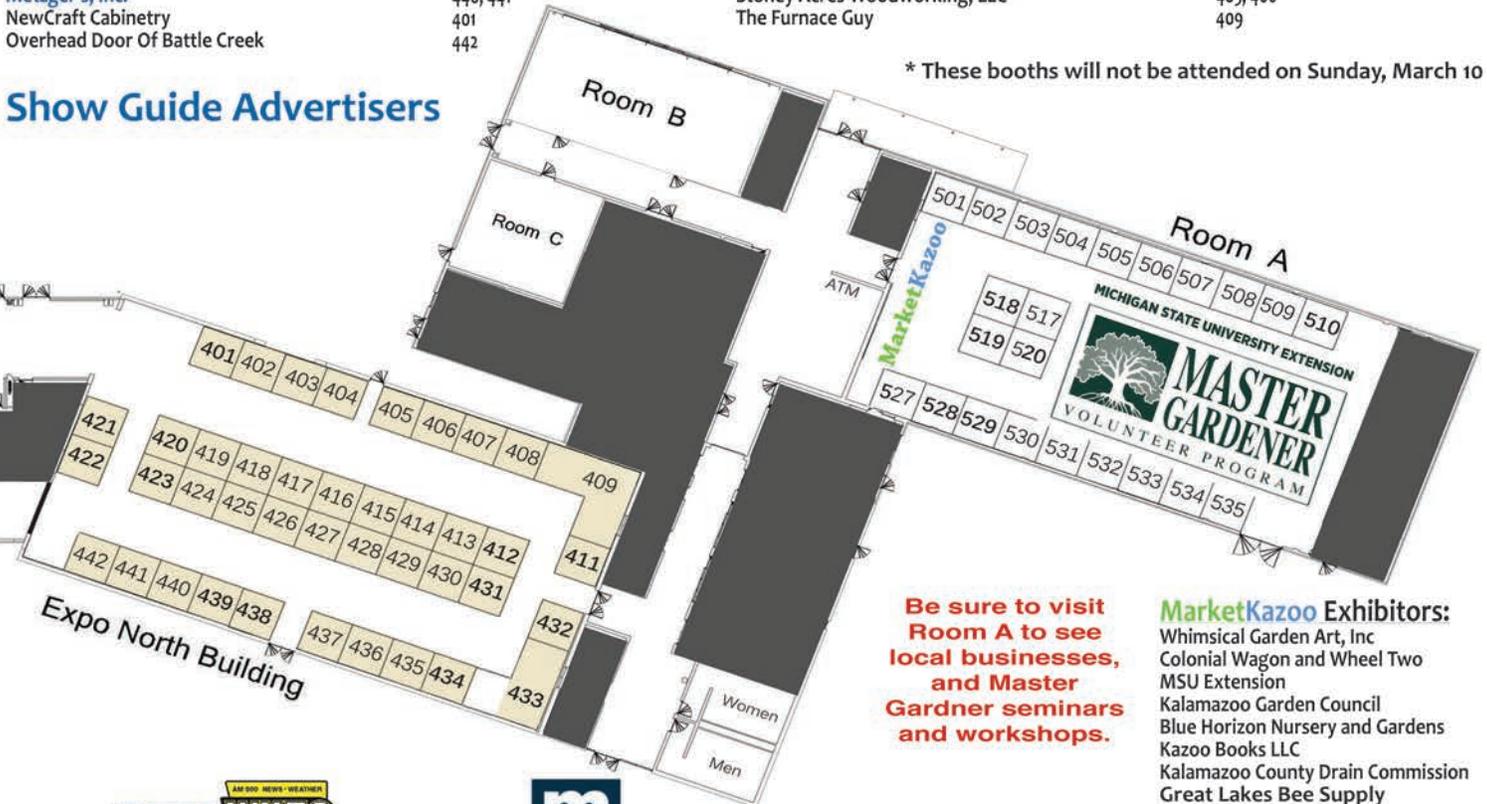
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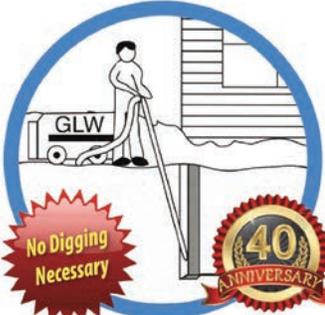
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# Selkirk Lake Project #8856

By Zinta Aistars  
Photography Courtesy of Pennings and Sons

**Y**our first thought as you climb the steps to the freshly painted white cottage on Selkirk Lake, northeast of Shelbyville, will no doubt be: sunshine!

How can it not be?

With the front door painted a daffodil yellow, and the shutters framing each window the same bright, egg-yolk yellow, the cottage seems all things golden and cozy—spring flowers and warm sunshine and beachside vacation.

Only the 1,660-square-foot home isn't just a weekend place away for owners Nancy and Doug Knobloch. It's home, year-round.

"We owned the property since the 1980s and used it as a summer cottage," Nancy Knobloch says. "Then, as we both retired, well, semi-retired, we decided to sell our house and make the lakeside property our one permanent residence."

The couple met with builders and contractors, Pennings & Sons, to discuss their plans.

"A good friend and neighbor referred Pennings & Sons to us," Doug Knobloch says. "She had used them for some work in her home and loved the quality results. She was our trusted source."

When the Knoblochs sat down with Brian Pennings, who would then oversee the project, soon to be referred to as Project #8856, he presented them with pros and cons of renovating the





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cottage already in place—or razing it to the ground and constructing a new home, with detached garage, in its place.

The Knoblochs decided on the latter. The summer cottage came down, even as Nancy rescued a few favorite pieces—family heirlooms, antiques, doors, kitchen cabinets—to later incorporate in the new design.

“Pennings & Sons has been in business for more than 40 years, and the family is now in its third generation,” Brian Pennings says. “One of the things that sets us apart is our design capabilities. I was able to show the Knoblochs 3-D images of what their new home would look like on our CAD system.”

“We paid a fee up front to see the design,” Doug says. “If we wanted to, we could take the design to any contractor of our choosing. We chose to stay with Pennings & Sons.”

“It was exactly like what you see on HGTV,” Nancy says, referring to the television station devoted to all things house. “We could work with the design and change things in a moment. It was a great way to see what the house would look like, a fun and educational way to do it.”

The Knoblochs wanted the home to focus on their favorite feature: the lakeside view. A wall of windows brings the view of the lake inside, and French doors open the living room to the two-tiered, paved patio outside, chairs pulled around a stone fire pit, inviting homeowners and guests to come sit a while and enjoy the breeze.

Inside, the kitchen is open to the living room, all in white, with accents of light grays and pale blues. The master bedroom and guest bedroom, master en suite and guest bathroom, and a craft corner are all decorated in pastel, beachy colors of greens and blues. The overall feel is an invitation to relax.

“My second favorite feature is the pantry in the kitchen,” Doug says. He’s the cook in the family.

The Knoblochs say there were no real surprises in building





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the cottage. They attribute that to a good working relationship and open communication with their builder.

"They kept to the budget we agreed upon," Doug says. "If we ended up going above that, it was because of some of the choices Nancy and I made."

Both homeowners and builder appreciated the tolerance of neighbors for all the noise and mess of the construction process, which took about five months to complete. On close and compact lakeside properties, communicating with neighbors about the building process can help everyone stay friends.

"Five to six months are pretty typical to move-in time," Pennings says. "Although building a house can also take up to a year, depending on the size of the project."

When getting started on such a project, Pennings recommends that homeowners put together a wish list of wants and needs, perhaps clippings of photos of styles and features they like to get the designer started, and, of course, a general budget.

Different townships have different zoning requirements, and the designer will check on those for any needed variances before breaking ground.

"If there were any surprises, it was the cost of construction," Doug says. "That's by no means a criticism of our builder. It's just how much materials cost now. Our builder kept to the cost we all agreed upon up front."

"We were a bit naïve about that," Nancy agrees. "But it was all an enjoyable experience."

The finished home was on the Parade of Homes in summer 2018. Because of its distance from Kalamazoo, the Knoblochs and their builder weren't expecting many visitors, but were pleasantly surprised at the many positive comments received by those who took the drive.

"I heard many comments about how comfortable and inviting the house was," Pennings says. "People would say—I'd like to sit and stay a while."

"And the bright yellow pops of color were surprisingly popular," Nancy says. "I chose yellow because it was a more unique accent color, and because it is so cheerful."

The Knoblochs also worked with Flair Interiors when choosing some of their interior colors, fixtures, and window treatments.



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# Creating a Home Library

By Zinta Aistars

**A** home library is the one room in your home constructed purely for relaxation, an invitation to get lost in a good book, wine glass or coffee cup in hand, feet propped up, a slant of light falling across the page.

Family memorabilia dot the bookshelves between the stacks—framed photos from gatherings with family and friends; vases and statues that remind one of the gift giver, the family heirloom, the trip abroad; a long, elegant feather of a bird, a chestnut polished smooth, a split-open amethyst with lavender crystals exposed, a sea shell. Every item carries with it a cherished memory.

## AND THE BOOKS.

“Collect what you love,” says Gloria Tiller, owner of Kazoo Books. “Your home library isn’t about impressing someone else, but for you to add your personal treasures, books you love and knick-knacks that remind you of good moments in your life.”

A home library is a reflection of the person or family who owns it. There was a time when a library was a bit of a stodgy place, filled with musty books and uncomfortable furniture. Today, it is the room that invites and welcomes you.

“When we first look at the room the homeowner has chosen for a library, we think about what would make it warm and comfortable,” says Tim Green,

owner of Flair Interiors. “It can be a multi-purpose room. We had a client who wanted her piano in the library and hung favorite artwork. It became another family room where the family came together and grandparents read stories to their grandchildren.”

## THE RIGHT SPACE IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Choosing the right room to create a library can depend on various factors and personal choices. A good place to begin is by considering lighting. While bright light through large windows may at first seem like a good choice for reading, too much sunlight on books can be destructive.

“Especially if you are collecting first editions or valuable hard cover books, don’t put them in direct sun,” Tiller advises. “Books will fade and deteriorate in sun. And you want to remove any plastic covers—they can gather condensation in warmth and cause damage.”

The right degree of humidity (or lack of) in a library can help preserve books for many years, if not generations, of enjoyment. Too much humidity can cause books to warp and even grow moldy. Basements and attics are not ideal for a library because of exposure to humidity and pests.

Other factors to consider may be nearby noise—the absence of—and

perhaps a sense of seclusion. Having a fireplace as a central point in the room is a classic feature of libraries. Consider the size of your collection and make sure you have enough space to contain it with room to grow.

## HOLDING IT UP

Once you have assessed the size and scope of your book collection, choose shelving that will hold your books with space to spare if you intend to collect more. Deciding on size and placement of shelving, along with style, is key to creating the library of your dreams.

Think also about the floor below the shelving—make sure your floor is strong enough to withstand the substantial weight of loaded shelving. Freestanding units should be attached to the wall to prevent tipping over.

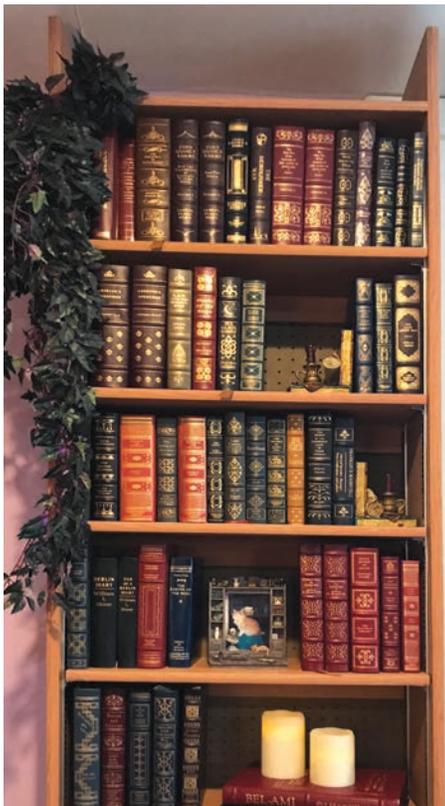
“We love adjustable shelves,” Green says. “You’ll want at least a 14-inch shelf for most books, and for the standard book size, you’ll want to place your shelves 12 to 14 inches apart. We use a three-quarter-inch thick wooden shelf with tongue-and-groove in back to prevent sagging and add a trim piece across the front that adds structural strength. Sometimes we add a string of tiny lights hidden behind that front lip to light up your books.”

Options include adjustable shelves, freestanding bookcases, but also built-ins. Green says with adjustable shelving,



Courtesy of Flair Interiors

there are more options with placement—anything from stacking up and down, ceiling to floor, to his favorite, a Z-shape in shelf alignment.



Courtesy of Kazoo Books

“Things tend to look better in odd numbers, broken up a bit rather than just lined up,” Green says. “Rooms with cathedral ceilings can look good with built-ins with a display area here and there to break up the height.”

#### IN THE MOOD FOR A GOOD BOOK

Setting the mood for a long and leisurely read completes the library. Fireplaces are no doubt the most popular focal point to a home library, with comfortable seating placed around them.

“Many of our clients also like to have a desk in their library,” Green says. “Today some people are choosing standing desks. You’ll want to have a sofa or a large ottoman surrounded by maybe four chairs. We have an ottoman in our own home with plush, soft sides so you can plop up your feet, but a wooded area in the center where you can put down your drink.”

Green also suggests swivel “tub” chairs as an option, so the seated person can turn from one part of the room to the other with ease or follow the light from the window.

“Swing-arm standing lamps are making a strong comeback, too,” he says. “They make it easy to move the light right where you need it.”

A window seat with pillows or cushions can be another tempting spot to daydream and read.

“You might also want to add an area

to hold your trade magazines if you have a special interest and subscribe to magazines or newspapers,” Green says.

#### A SPOT FOR EVERY BOOK

“If it’s a working library, you will want to organize your books in a way that you can find what you want easily,” Tiller says. “Choose a way to organize your books that makes sense to you. You probably won’t want the Dewey decimal system the public library uses, but you might organize by your favorite categories, such as mysteries, cookbooks, travel. Or you may order your books by author.”

Various software programs or online tracking sites can also help organize your collection, Tiller says.

Tiller also recommends creating a shelf for every member of the family. Each person can put their favorites on their own shelf. Smaller grandchildren may want a lower shelf for easy access, along with a few toys or a teddy bear to tuck under an arm during story time.

“I also have a shelf for myself of books I want to read next,” Tiller says. “That one’s always full.”





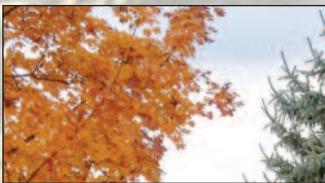
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## Get off Your Screens with the Yard of Your Dreams

*Courtesy of Murray Landscaping*

By Brittany Tomaselli

All winter long you've been holed up, hiding under blankets, eyes probably glued to a screen of some sort. When you did look out the window, perhaps to check just how much snow shoveling was in your future, your yard probably didn't look very inviting. Maybe on a sunny day in February you were at least tempted to imagine the sensation of grass cushioning your toes while sunshine warms your bare arms. Lounging on a patio. Maybe you even found yourself in the landscaping and gardening category on Pinterest. You might have told yourself, this year, I'm going to actually enjoy being outdoors. Now that Old Man Winter has loosened his grip on Michigan, it's time to take those steps and make your landscaping dreams a reality.

### THE PINTEREST PARADOX

We might not always think about it, but the ways we take advantage of our yards and gardens has a tendency to reflect what's going on culturally. In the 1950's, our post-war country epitomized "the American Dream" by transforming our backyards from private and functional victory gardens to an oasis for socializing with family and neighbors. By the 1980's, the wealth of new technologies afforded homeowners cheaper, more efficient options to care for their yards as well as more complex design opportunities. By the early aughts, we had a variety of home makeover and garden design TV shows to illustrate the possibilities of transforming our outdoor spaces. In present-day 2019 we not only have TV shows dedicated to landscaping, but enthusiasts have also created a myriad of internet platforms such as Pinterest, dedicated to inspiring creative outdoor design ideas and providing a stage for us to show our yards off to the world. Thanks to the internet and social media, we have unending sources of design inspiration and a way to share our homes with people who would never see them otherwise.

On the other hand, screen addiction is a real problem. According to recent studies, American adults spend, on average, more than 11 hours per day staring at screens. Instead of going outside and creating our own experiences, we're engrossed in the experiences of others regardless of the quality of those experiences or how rooted they are in reality. Is it possible to take advantage of the internet to inspire an environment that gets you outside

without falling prey to living in its fantasy world? Yes--if you bring in an experienced professional to get the job done. With the help of a seasoned landscaper, actually creating that outdoor space of your dreams is now, more than ever, within your reach.

### GET INSPIRED

Even with a simple Google search it's incredibly easy to find ideas that are suited to your tastes, examples that reflect your unique personality. You'd think this might create some unattainable expectations, but for a professional landscaper, the more excited you are about your yard's potential, the more excited they are to make that dream come alive. Ken Murray, owner of Murray Landscaping, says that "With the advent of the internet and Pinterest, people are very informed....they've already got pictures, which is a good starting point for me." This head start allows professionals to focus more on making the project individually suited to their client's personality instead of getting bogged down in the basics. Ken says that now he can start with their ideas and "educate them on what would look good for their house." Similarly, Jim Garrison, owner of Sandstone Creations, notes: "Understanding a client and their interests helps us plan and create just the right spot."

### UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES

The increased interest in and resources for transforming outdoor spaces means there is almost nothing you can't do. Ken Murray says he's had more chances to take on large scale projects such as outdoor kitchens, patios, firepits, and even outdoor pizza ovens. People are seeing value in designs that allow them to spend more of their time outside. "Outdoor kitchens are becoming more and more popular," he says, "Everybody wants to be outdoors and entertaining." Ken also says that features such as water fixtures are easier to install and are available in more options than ever, from bubbling rock fountains to full-on waterfalls. Whether you're wanting a total overhaul or a more subtle transformation, landscapers can clue you in to the variety of choices you have. "I get excited about creating a space that will draw people to it," says Jim Garrison. "For example: an outdoor



Courtesy of Sandstone Creations

kitchen in just the right spot under a cedar pergola; a fire pit nestled into a hillside; a patio perched between tiered retaining walls overlooking a lake." Jim also mentions that technologies such as new wet casting techniques allow for more realistic textures on paving and retaining walls. The result is that you can completely reconstruct an area without making it look artificial. And this means that with a landscaper's expert knowledge, if you can dream it, they can most likely build it.

**DON'T FORGET MAINTENANCE**

While more and more homeowners are inspired to transform their outdoor spaces, it's not quite so common that they have time for intense upkeep. This is where consulting with a professional will also come in handy. No matter what, there is going to be some maintenance necessary. It's important for you to know how much time you'll need to spend caring for your dream space. Professional landscapers can both educate

you about what your vision will require to stay beautiful and provide you with options suited to your schedule and budget. Using shrubs that require less pruning, perennials, and small gardening beds are just some examples for those wanting to minimize time consuming tasks. Discussing your time and budget constraints with a landscaper can help you set realistic maintenance expectations so that you don't end up feeling overwhelmed.

**MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER**

Having an outdoor living space provides opportunities to hold gatherings and interact with one another in real-time. A barbecue with neighbors, a romantic evening in the hot tub with your spouse, your kid's high school graduation party. While we as a culture struggle with managing our time on the internet, having a such a place can be the vital push it takes for us to put down our phones and look around. Calling in the experts can open up landscaping possibilities that create even more connection and enjoyment than we thought possible.



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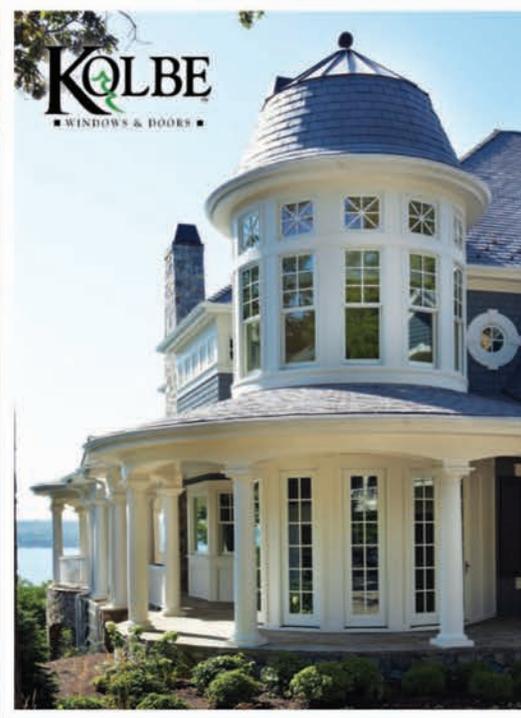
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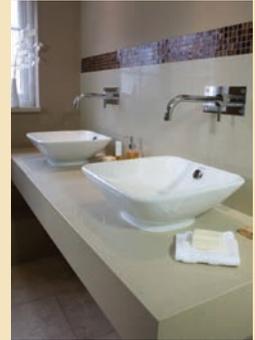


KITCHEN AND BATH CABINETS AND COUNTERTOPS

Visit Our Showroom at  
8308 Shaver Road - Just South of Centre in Portage

**269.329.1800**  
[www.abodebuilding.com](http://www.abodebuilding.com)

CABINETS | COUNTERTOPS | WINDOWS | DOORS | GARAGE DOORS & MORE!



## **DONE IN A DAY – BEAUTIFUL FOR LIFE**

Our innovative surfaces install in about a day, are stain resistant, maintenance-free, and backed by a LIMITED LIFETIME WARRANTY.

Choose from quartz, granite, recycled glass and a wide array of mosaic tiles. Our unique resurfacing process allows us to fit countertops directly over existing ones, so there isn't the time and mess involved with traditional remodeling.

For a **FREE** in-home design consultation, call us at: **855-667-4275**

[Granitetransformations.com/grandrapids](http://Granitetransformations.com/grandrapids)

SEE US AT  
**BOOTH #244**



**GRANITE**  
**TRANSFORMATIONS**  
For Kitchens & Baths