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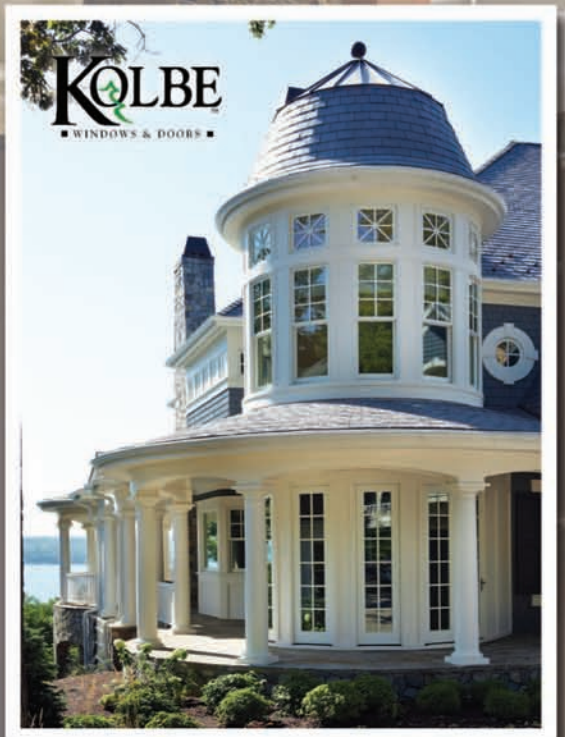
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Darn Delicious Carne Asada

A Flavor-Packed Favorite for the Grill

This carne asada delivers everything you want from a great steak: smoky char on the outside and juicy, tender slices inside. Fresh cilantro, citrus juices, garlic, and jalapeño create a bright, herbaceous marinade, while a touch of soy sauce adds savory depth. Finished with a reserved cilantro sauce and sliced thin against the grain, this versatile steak is equally at home piled into warm tortillas, served over rice, or enjoyed straight from the cutting board.

Ingredients

- ½ cup fresh cilantro leaves, chopped
- 1 cup olive oil
- ¼ cup reduced-sodium soy sauce
- ¼ cup fresh orange juice
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and diced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1½ pounds flank steak
- Kosher salt and black pepper, to taste

Instructions

Combine cilantro, olive oil, soy sauce, orange juice, lime juice, garlic, jalapeño, cumin, and black pepper in a medium bowl. Reserve ½ cup of the mixture for serving. Place flank steak in a large zip-top bag or shallow dish and pour the remaining marinade over the meat. Marinate at least 4 hours, preferably about 8 hours, turning occasionally. Drain and pat dry before cooking. Heat grill to high (about 450°F). Season steak with salt and pepper. Grill 3–5 minutes per side, until internal temperature reaches 125–130°F. Rest steak 5–10 minutes before slicing thinly against the grain. Spoon reserved cilantro mixture over top before serving.

Serving Suggestions

- Taco Night: Serve with warm tortillas, diced white onion, fresh cilantro, and lime wedges.
- Rice Bowls: Pair with white rice, cilantro-lime rice, or Spanish rice.
- Indoor Option: A hot cast-iron skillet or grill pan works beautifully.

Todd Modderman Nate Modderman

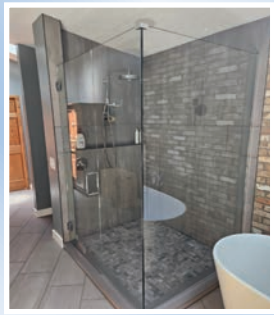
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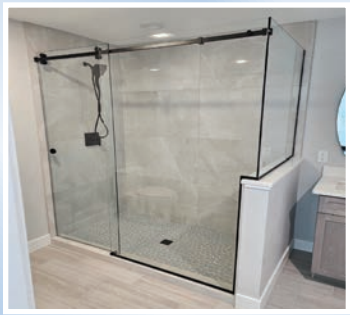
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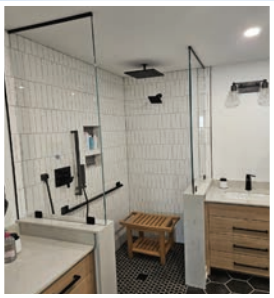
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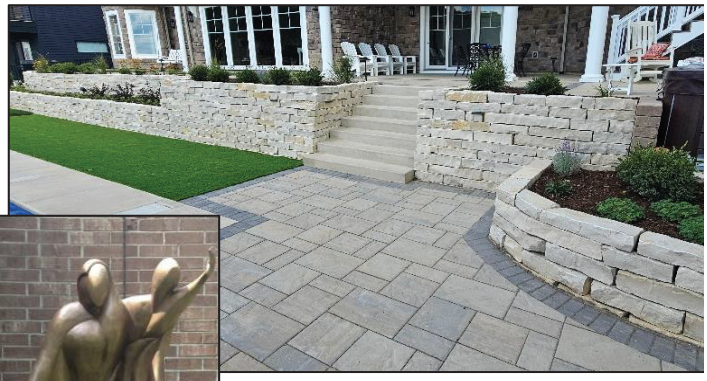


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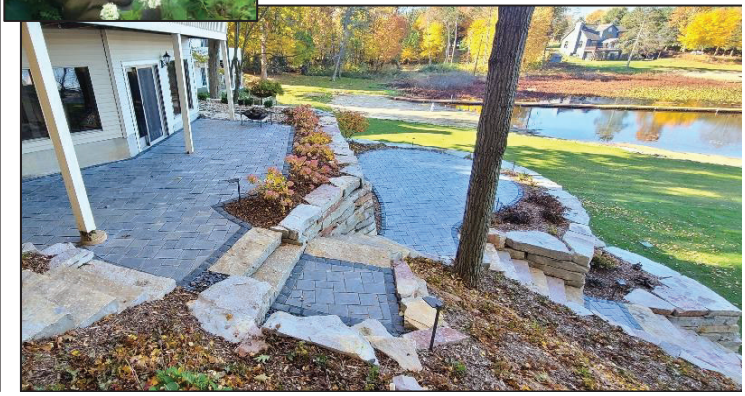




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By Barbara Fisher
Photos Courtesy of Climax-Scotts Community Schools

Climax-Scotts Community Schools had its beginnings in a repurposed log cabin. From there, numerous one-room schoolhouses began dotting the rural landscapes of Climax and Scotts. In 1958 the communities created the Climax-Scotts Consolidated School District to pool resources and expand student opportunities.

Climax Village (population 700) is located about 12 miles west of Battle Creek and 16 miles east of Kalamazoo. Climax incorporated as a village in 1899, was the site of the first Rural Free Delivery in Michigan in December 1896 (delivering to 300 farms on the first day), and was home to a combine harvester inventor, Hiram Moore, in 1830. The Village is located within Climax Township (population 2,400). The name Climax is attributed to Daniel Eldred who was quoted as announcing "This caps the climax of everything I ever saw."

Scotts is unincorporated with a population of 187 and its population is split between Climax and Pavilion Townships. The Kalamazoo County Scotts Mill County Park (home of the 1870 grist mill) is located in Climax.

Today, Climax-Scotts Community Schools remains connected to its agricultural roots, Heather Wechsler, Communications & Public Relations Director, offers that the district "is more than a school district, it's a Panther family. Families, staff, students, alumni, businesses, and community members work together every day to support one another and create opportunities for success". She goes on to say "this partnership is visible throughout the district. Students are known personally, supported academically, encouraged socially, challenged intellectually and celebrated for their achievements. The combination of personalized attention, community support, strong academics, expanding opportunities, and a culture of belonging continues to make Climax-Scotts a destination district for families". The district recently completed significant improvements through voter-approved bond initiatives.

With an enrollment of 632, Climax-Scotts divides students between an elementary school located in Scotts (pre-Kindergarten–5th grade) and a combined Junior and Senior High School (located in Climax for grades 6-12). A virtual academy is offered for grades 6-12. The virtual academy offers educational pathways for non-traditional students as well as youth who face scheduling or medical challenges, are home schooled or learn best independently.

The district offers pre-K Three's and a Four-Year-Old Preschool to give pre-school children a solid start to later successes. Safe and supervised before and after school programming is offered for pre-school through grade 5.

Panther pride and achievement are evident when it comes to academics and its 100% graduation rate backs this up. Augmenting traditional classrooms, Career & Technical Education is available through the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA), allowing students to earn marketable skills and credentials. The Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center provides advanced STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) opportunities for qualifying students. Dual enrollment allows students to earn college credits while still enrolled in high school. The Early Middle College program is a 5-year high school program (rather than the traditional four) that, upon completion, earns students not only their high school diploma, but also either an associate degree or technical certification. Both programs yield reduced college costs and accelerated academic opportunities.

The district is part of the Southern Central Athletic Conference and offers 8-player football (making it to the regional playoffs in 2025-26), basketball (girls and boys), baseball (boys), softball (girls), cross country (boys and



girls), volleyball (girls), wrestling (a single boys and girls competing on one team), golf (boys and girls), soccer (girls and boys by way of a co-op with Calhoun Christian) and track and field (girls and boys). Ms. Wechsler notes that Climax-Scotts takes tremendous pride in producing student-athletes who excel both academically and athletically.

The arts and clubs make their marks in the district at all grade levels with a new District Art Show, elementary art club, and a drama club leading the way. In addition to the drama club providing productions for the community, students develop confidence, creativity, public speaking skills, teamwork, and technical theater experience. Adds Ms. Wechsler, "Students regularly participate in educational experiences at the historic Barn Theatre in Augusta, Michigan."

The district's inaugural PantherBots Robotics Team made its mark on the competitive robotics scene earning the team the prestigious FIRST Robotics Rookie All-Star Award and qualifying for the Michigan State Championship. FIRST in Michigan is a robotics community powered by mentorship, teamwork, creativity and engineering. The district recently created a bond-funded, dedicated Robotics Lab providing students with a space for design, fabrication, programming, and testing to continue to foster technical and interpersonal skills. A Dungeons & Dragons Club is one of the district's fastest growing student organizations. The club provides a welcoming environment for students who may not participate in traditional competitive activities while promoting strategic thinking, problem solving and teamwork. The Publications Program produces the Panther Paws Newsletter and the yearbook. Students learn practical and functional experience in journalism, photography, graphic design, editing and publishing.



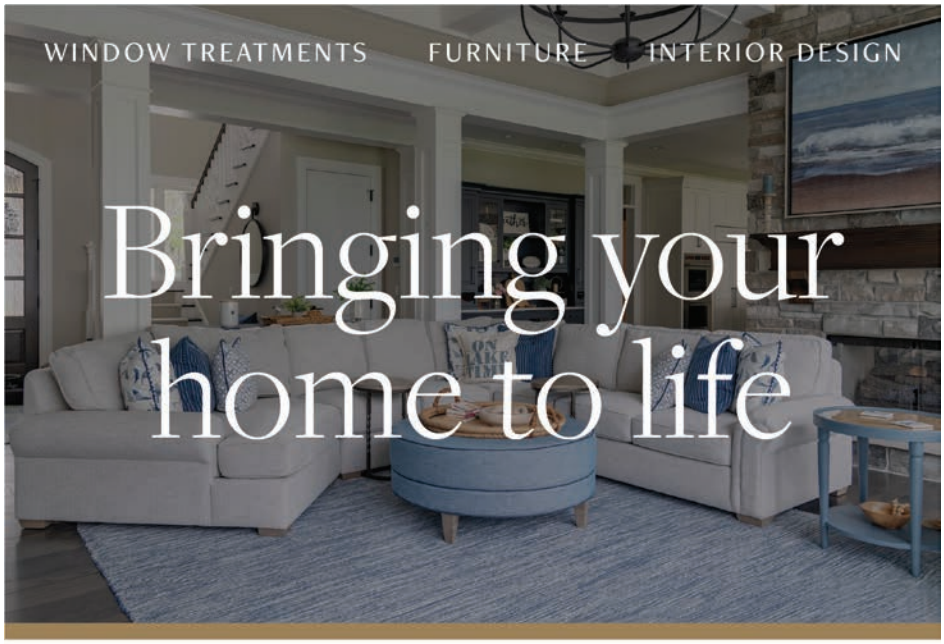
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The Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) promotes healthy decision-making and student wellness. The National Honor Society recognizes students who demonstrate scholarship, leadership, service and character.

Ms. Wechsler summarizes by saying, "Few districts have a story quite like Climax-Scotts. The district unites two historic communities making the district a shared center of educational, social, athletic, and cultural life for both communities. This unique partnership, combined with strong community support, continues to make Climax-Scotts Community Schools a place where students are known, opportunities are abundant, and Panther Pride runs deep".

For more information, e-mail cspr@csschools.net, call (269) 746-2402, or visit the Climax-Scotts website: csschools.net.



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No Free Lunch: The GLP-1 Muscle Loss Problem

By Michael Luepke

Nearly one in eight Americans, roughly twelve percent of all adults, are now taking a GLP-1 medication. The rise of these drugs has fundamentally changed how people approach weight loss. Millions have experienced dramatic results, shedding pounds faster than traditional dieting alone. But beneath the success stories lies a critical misconception: that these medications are a standalone solution. They aren't.

Lane Norton, a bodybuilder and doctor of exercise physiology, has been direct about the stakes of obesity. He's said that virtually anything you can do to lose one hundred pounds, even if you pick up smoking to lose that weight, is worth the health trade-off. Norton is absolutely not advocating for smoking. That's how metabolically destructive excess weight is. It may be true that GLP-1 medications are exactly what America's obesity crisis needs. But if this is the avenue you go down, there are some things you need to understand. Because there's no free lunch.

GLP-1 medications work by slowing how fast your stomach empties and telling your brain you're full. Brilliant for eating less. The drugs genuinely work. But here's the thing nobody talks about: they don't care about your strength or physique.

The problem isn't just the weight. It's the muscle mass you need to protect your metabolism; muscle mass that protects your vitality, prevents disease, and sustains your independence.

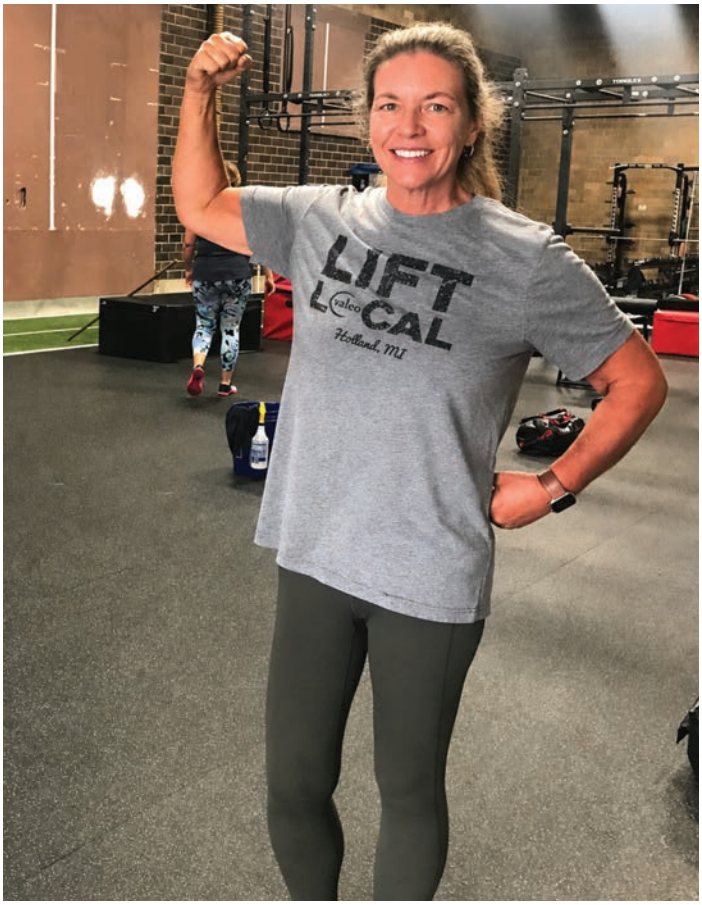
This is where GLP-1s and strength training intersect in ways most people completely miss.

Caloric deficit threatens lean muscle mass. GLP-1s don't change that condition, they accelerate it. When you're in a severe caloric deficit, your lean mass is under even greater threat. But one variable changes everything: concurrent resistance training.

GLP-1 medications aren't without side effects, and they warrant medical supervision. But here's what the research on body composition actually shows.

Recent research on muscle loss reveals something most people don't realize. GLP-1s don't cause disproportionate muscle loss compared to diet alone, but that's only true under one condition: concurrent resistance training. When people combine GLP-1 use with strength training and adequate protein intake, the ratio of fat loss to muscle loss actually improves relative to dieting without medication. A 2024 trial found that roughly ninety-three percent of total weight loss came from fat mass when combined with strength training, compared to seventy-two percent with the drug alone. Would you take twenty percent more muscle? I would.

Here's the bottom line: GLP-1 doesn't magically preserve muscle; it doesn't actively destroy i… if you're lifting heavy things and eating enough protein. The drug dampens the anabolic signal, the stimulus your muscles need to grow, which is the opposite of what you want during weight loss. Your muscles are already under threat from calorie deficit. Add a medication that reduces the growth signal, and you're fighting an uphill battle without resistance training.



GLP-1 medications are legitimate pharmacological tools. But tools require proper application.

According to Alwyn Cosgrove, MSc CSCS, head coach of Team USA obstacle course racing world champions, strength training isn't optional baggage with GLP-1 use. It's the load-bearing wall of the entire structure. Without it, you're trading excess fat for muscle you'll regret losing, muscle that burns calories at rest, supports bone density, enables athletic performance, and frankly, makes you look better once the weight comes off.

If you're using GLP-1 medication, you need to be strength training two to four times per week with full body workouts, prioritizing compound movements and progressive overload. You need to hit your protein targets, roughly point seven to one gram per pound of body weight. And you need to understand that the drug is doing one job: reducing your appetite. It's not building muscle. It's not optimizing body composition. You are.

GLP-1 medications are legitimate pharmacological tools. But tools require proper application. The difference between someone who uses GLP-1 and ends up lean and capable, versus someone who ends up skinny and frail, comes down to one variable: whether they treated strength training as optional or essential. The research is clear: if you're taking a GLP-1 and want to preserve your vitality, capability, and physique, strength training is non-negotiable.



Mike is a strength, coach, gym owner and 25 year veteran of the fitness industry.

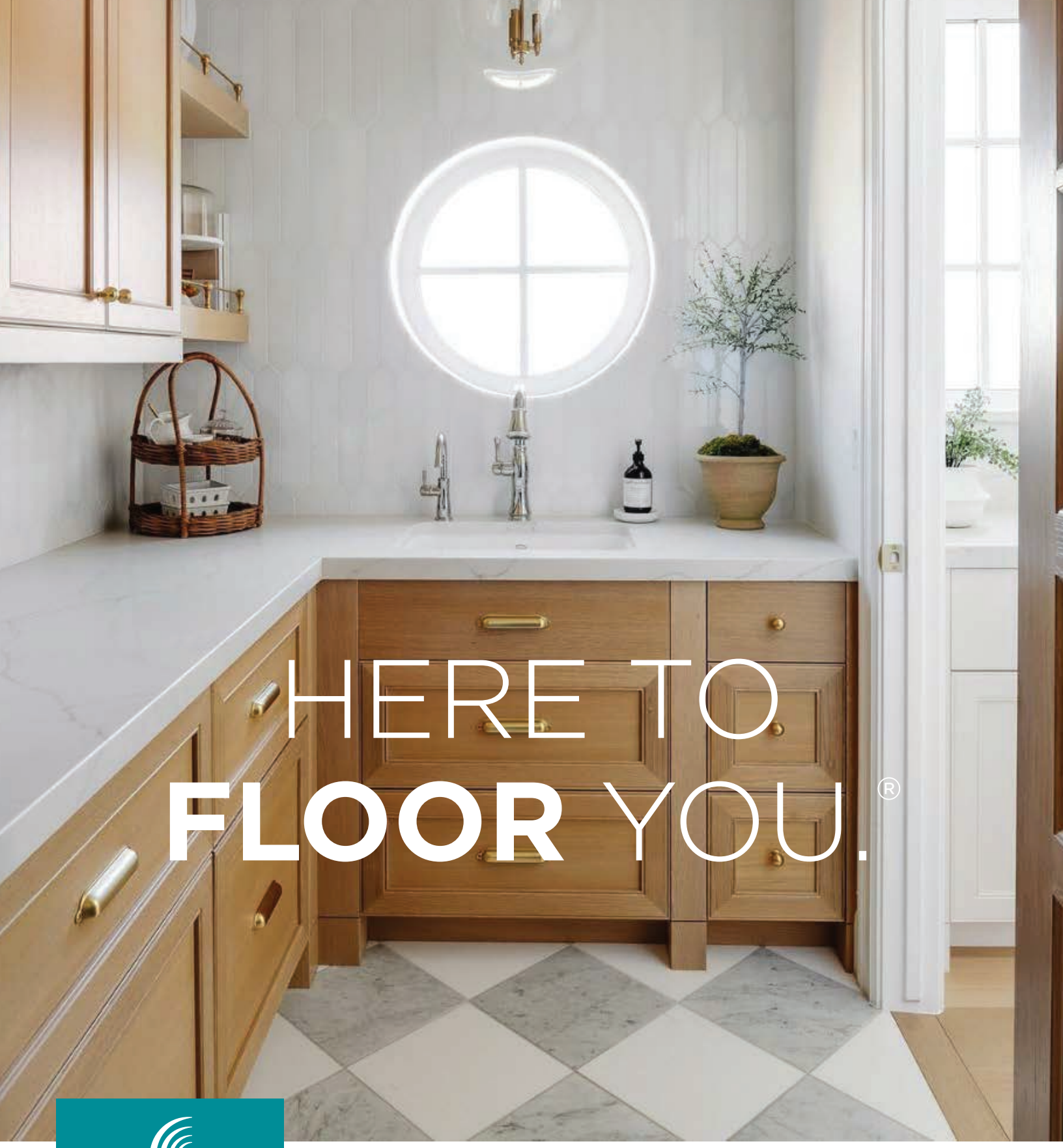
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Room to Grow, Character to Keep

By Jules Dash

Photography by Kris Walker

Jim and Anna were young and newly married when they purchased the Craftsman Bungalow in 2003 — a sturdy 1910 home in Kalamazoo, Michigan, full of original charm but decidedly short on livable space. As their family grew, the kitchen, which had never been more than an afterthought wedged into the bones of the old house, became increasingly impossible to work in. The family didn't set out to renovate the entire first floor. But when Anna went to select new kitchen cabinets, everything changed.

That's when she met designer Ana Blok of Droomhuis Design — Dutch for "dream house" — whose vision for the space, and for how the rest of the first floor could flow and breathe, was instantly captivating. "We gave her an idea of what we wanted, she started with a sketch, and we were all in," Anna said. What started as a kitchen refresh evolved into a comprehensive first-floor renovation — one that began with architectural drawings in the summer of 2021, broke ground in May 2022, and wasn't complete until July 2023, reshaping not just the house but how the family actually lived in it.

"We could have moved out, but we didn't," Anna said. Living through the construction became their saving grace. By staying in the house day to day, they caught problems as they surfaced — structural surprises, old-home challenges, construction missteps — rather than discovering them after the fact. It's a choice that shaped not just the outcome, but the entire experience of becoming a partner in the design process itself.

The original home had absorbed decades of additions and revisions, each one layered onto the last without much thought to flow or cohesion. The kitchen was tiny, the spaces disconnected, the bones of the 1910 Craftsman buried under a century of patchwork. Blok's vision was to honor what the house was while making it genuinely livable. A modern take on a classic design — one that didn't look new, but rather as though it had always belonged there.

One of the most satisfying changes happened right at the threshold. The old entry used to open directly into one large, undefined room. Now it opens into a proper foyer — a buffer between outside and in, papered in a soft floral pattern reminiscent of William Morris, anchored by an antique writing desk and a brass-framed mirror. A coat closet close at hand, a pantry tucked nearby, stocked with everyday goods on open shelving. Ample joys, as Anna put it, can be found in the smallest things: a place to hang a coat, to transition from street to home. The space that had been



















that undefined room became a hearth room, intimate and cozy, anchored by a white-painted brick fireplace where a russet armchair and slipcovered seating invite quiet moments.

The kitchen itself became the heart of the project, and it shows. Soapstone counters in a deep, veined charcoal — the same material that Blok carried throughout the home — pair with a backsplash of traditionally fired zellige tile in soft cream. White cabinetry with brass hardware and brass pendant lighting creates a clean backdrop, while a sage-green island adds warmth and breaks up the expanse. An exterior beam-step detail carries through to the corbels supporting the range hood, tying the addition's exterior language to its interior finishes.

A quieter detail speaks loudest to the home's history: the cabinetry isn't inset. Instead, it's built in a three-eighths-inch lipped style, designed to mimic the site-built cabinets that early builders once installed directly into a home's walls — a small choice that makes a brand-new, fully efficient kitchen feel as though it has always belonged there. A coffee bar tucked to one side, open shelving displaying white dishware with a beverage cooler tucked below, brings both function and personality.

Materials and color throughout were pulled from research into the home's own era. The original oak floor color was matched and toothed into the new construction so the transition disappears underfoot. The palette — deep greens, terracotta accents in wallpapers, and contrasting creams — comes straight from historical color charts rather than a current trend board. Functionality hides in plain sight: the pantry, the coffee bar, an expanded office space with slate-blue built-in cabinetry and a warm wood desktop all do quiet work behind a very traditional-looking front.

But the renovation wasn't without its challenges. Breaking through an exterior wall on a steep grade, adding both a main-floor and lower-level addition along the entire end of the house — these brought structural puzzles. The front of the home needed to tie visually into the original frieze boards and moldings. The back half of the house, meanwhile, had settled unevenly over a century, shifting more than three inches in places. Blok's solution was elegant: a deep, wood-trimmed cased opening that feathers out the drop in floor heights between the dining area and living room, hiding the transition in plain sight while concealing rerouted waste stacks and gas lines beneath. Looking through that opening, from the kitchen toward the round breakfast table bathed in light from multiple windows, you see the design working at full capacity — problem solved, beauty intact.

Light was as much a part of the renovation as layout. What had been a notably dark interior now draws illumination from multiple directions, balanced by linen drapery and plantation shutters chosen to preserve privacy without blocking the glow. Large windows frame views to mature trees outside. A round breakfast table sits beneath a drum pendant, a sunny everyday spot distinct from more



formal dining. A window seat tucked above a radiator becomes a reading nook. A generous living room opens onto the addition, anchored by a patterned area rug and warm furnishings that feel lived-in from day one.

The most meaningful detail came as a gift. Ana Blok designed and furnished the family photo wall throughout the home as a personal surprise — arranging framed family photographs and personal mementos on walls and shelves in a way that felt thoughtful and intentional. It transformed the space from beautifully designed to genuinely personal, a home that reflects more than two decades of life lived and loved within its walls.

For Anna, the open flow from entry to kitchen to deck was always the dream. The lake view was a must-have. What started as a design feature has become central to how the family actually lives. Unlike before the renovation, they're now doing quite a bit of hosting. The easy access to the backyard opened up an entire world of outdoor living, and the functionality of the new kitchen and gathered spaces makes gathering natural. Friends and family fill the home regularly now, drawn by the light, the flow, and the comfort of spaces designed specifically to bring people together.

Jim and Anna are empty-nesters now. Landscaping remains a work in progress. And Blok, for her part, left an impression well beyond the blueprints — "She's such a pleasant personality," Anna said, crediting her attention to detail as much as her design sense for making the whole experience work.

Asked what she'd want readers to take from the project, Blok was clear: "I would love for readers to notice that although the home looks fresh, it does not look brand new. There was not a room or surface, inside or out, that did not get at least painted or otherwise completely re-done. Pinterest, AI and Instagram are great at generating beautiful new-build ideas, but could never authentically incorporate historically accurate information into a remodel like this. For that you need an educated designer and personal conversations that help merge personal style and tastes into an existing framework."

It was a challenging project, by Anna's own account — and absolutely worth it. Asked what she hopes people feel when they walk through the door today, the answer was simple: comfort. Cozy. Exactly what a hundred-year-old bungalow was always meant to offer.

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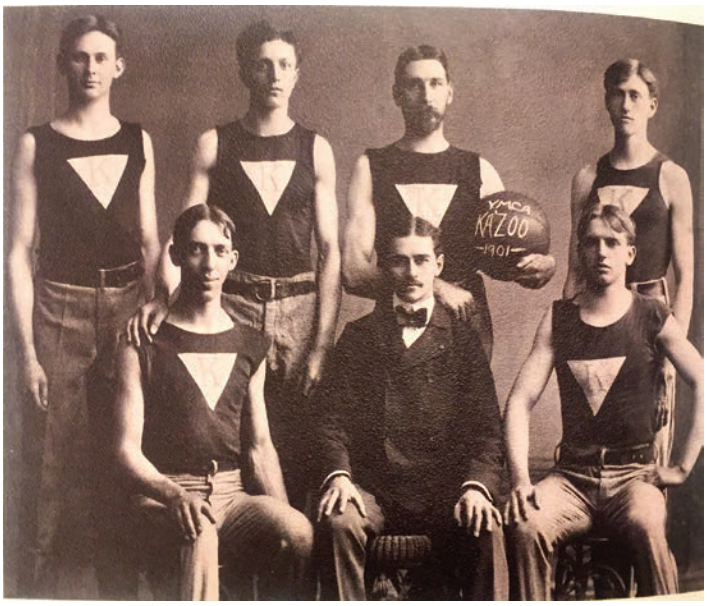


1 60 Years Strong: YMCA Building Better Bodies; Building Better Communities

By Barbara Fisher
Photos Courtesy of YMCA Greater Kalamazoo

The YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo celebrates 160 years in 2026. Herb Pifer, General Secretary from 1964 – 1985) observed, "Describing in detail [the Y's] many worthwhile activities is like attempting to paint a picture of a kaleidoscope with all its changing colors and hues." But, we'll do our best to capture some of the highlights contributing to the YMCAs rich and long-term impact on the community.

The first YMCA in Kalamazoo was started in 1866; men coming together in faith and community in homes, organizations and churches. Following a period of inactivity, the Young Men's Christian Association's 270 members moved into the organization's first building in 1892 (what today is Michigan Avenue and Park Street). Then, the YMCA offered lodging, reading rooms and space for activities and sports that supported the body, mind and spirit. In 1911 the building and all historical records were destroyed by a fire. Undaunted, a rapid decision was made to rebuild and over 50,000 people turned out as President William Howard Taft laid the cornerstone of the new building at the same location. The building was completed in 1912, creating space for a swimming pool and increasing the number of 50-cents-a-night lodging rooms. From there, growth and change accelerated. Bowling lanes were built, more events and activities were added, members became more multi-generational plus women and girls (as guests of male members) began using the YMCA. In 1964, women and girls were afforded the right to become members. With the needs of the community changing, the YMCA built a new building on Maple Street in 1970 to serve its 2,250 members. No longer offering lodging, the space was geared toward serving the family through youth sports and group exercise through its tennis courts, two pools and racquetball courts. Vicky Kettner, Associate Director of Marketing, Community Relations and Member Engagement added a fun piece of nostalgia, "in 1978 the Village People came out with the YMCA song". (How many of you are singing it right now? Extra points if you're doing the arm movements!) Ms. Kettner quipped that the Y-USA initially filed a legal challenge for using the Y name but quickly came to its senses recognizing the worldwide popularity of the catchy song that promotes the YMCA brand at no cost to the organization.



In rapid succession, childcare was added during the 1980's, in 1989 the first women were appointed to lead the Board of Directors. In 1991, Center Courts in Portage was purchased, nearly doubling the YMCA service area. In 1992 the Lincoln Youth Program was added at Lincoln Elementary. Recently, an Early Learning Center was added to the Bogan Development project on Frank Street to serve families in the Northside neighborhood. In addition to these physical sites, the YMCA partners with Kalamazoo and Portage Public Schools to offer before- and after-school programs.

During COVID, the YMCA was closed to indoor activity for six months. Ms. Kettner observed that while many YMCAs across the U.S. faced permanent closure, Kalamazoo members and donors stood by the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo. A full 60% of members continued to pay their monthly dues even while unable to use the facility. During these dark times, the YMCA pivoted and turned its focus toward working with the Sherman Lake YMCA to provide meals to underserved neighborhoods.

The central focus of YMCA programs falls under Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility. Explained Ms. Kettner, "Our programs are intentionally created for all ages and abilities, focusing on building a health body, mind and spirit through fitness, instruction, learning and sports. The Y's Generations Campaign (2012) [provided momentum] to address the needs of the modern family: create safe space for youth, improve accessibility for seniors and persons with physical limitations and provide more opportunities for families. So many people use the Y primarily as their social outlet; the physical fitness aspect of participation, for them, is often secondary. It is a place of inspiration, connection, and deep mutual care. Friendships are made, nurtured, and celebrated here every single hour of every day."

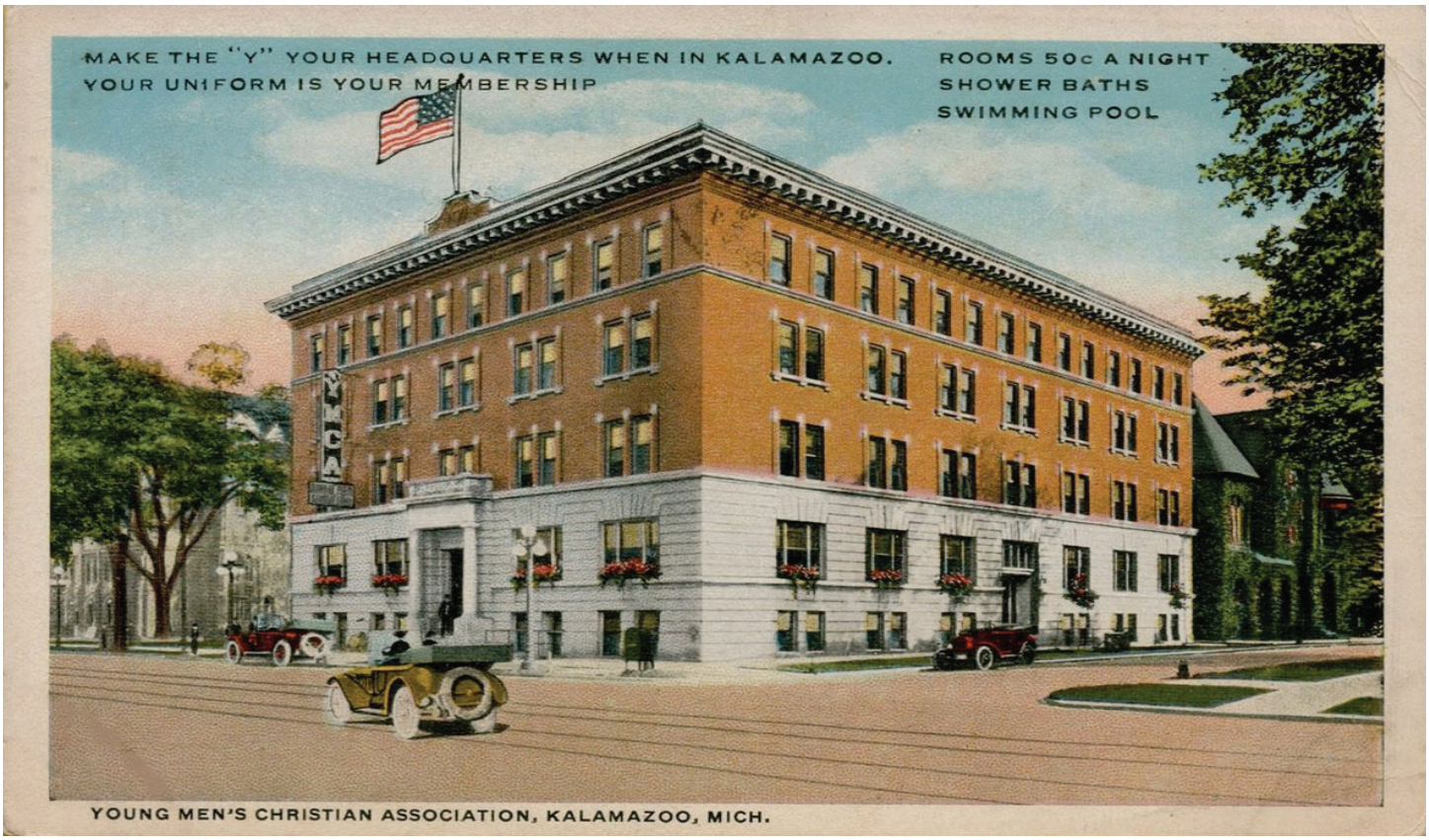
Unfamiliar with the amenities at each of the two primary YMCA locations?

Maple Street

- Two pools, lap lanes
- Resistance pool
- Hot tub
- Sauna & steam rooms
- Indoor and outdoor tennis courts
- Indoor track
- Free weights room
- Cardio room
- Racquetball courts
- Two gymnasiums
- Family locker room
- Kid Zone (childcare)
- On-site preschool
- Youth Center

Portage Location

- Indoor pool
- Indoor and outdoor tennis courts
- Pickleball courts
- Indoor track
- Free weights room
- Cardio room
- Teen Center
- Kid Zone (childcare)
- Family locker room







Membership at the YMCA is fee-based; however, fees are adjusted for anyone who is unable to afford the standard rates. Non-member events are offered such as day-trips to various destinations, Middle School Night Out, special community wellness events and more.

The YMCA is Praesidium accredited. Ms. Kettner explains, "This is the highest and strictest accreditation given to a non-profit organization regarding child safety. While many YMCAs across the country are currently working toward this benchmark, the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo is among the first in the nation to successfully achieve full accreditation. We take our responsibility as protectors of youth incredibly seriously, and enforce a strict zero-tolerance policy for any behaviors that put youth in jeopardy."



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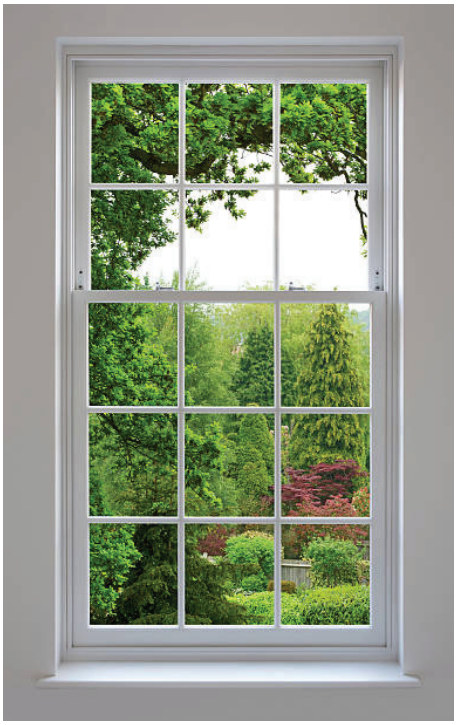
Windows: A Fresh Outlook

By Barbara Fisher

Windows. There is a bounty of functional and aesthetic considerations packed into those 7 letters. We look through our windows to connect with outside. They are an integral part of the interior décor of any room. They make rooms appear larger. Windows add natural light, which is linked to improved mood and emotional well-being. When opened, windows offer ventilation and are help clear smoke when kitchen mishaps set off the smoke detectors. They add valuable curb appeal to the exterior of our homes. They can be operating (they open) or fixed (they don't). Operating windows can open outward or inward, slide up and down or horizontally. Windows come in all shapes and sizes and can be understated or bold architectural statements. Placed next to or above entry doors, they can add a stunning statement to a point of entry. Windows can be built with interior blinds (no cleaning). Grills (bars that divide windows into smaller panels) can add extra panache. Art glass or decorative glass are options. Most window manufacturers offer stock frame colors (some having more stock colors than others) and several offer custom color matching. Window frames, at present, are trending to black for new construction and replacement windows. And, the color can be different on the interior and exterior of the frame. Now if only windows were self-cleaning!

Along with window options growing exponentially, energy efficiency standards continue to evolve. Explains Gary Howe, Project Manager for Property Revolutions and Howe Patio & Windows, while new Federal standards have been passed, they have not yet gone into effect, "Currently windows must meet R-5 requirements. This means double panes of glass, a layer of argon/krypton gas and a low-emissivity (low-e) coating on two of the internal surfaces. R-7 requirements, when adopted, will include 3 panes of glass". Howe continues, "Energy efficient windows stop drafts and minimize heat transfer so that furnaces and air conditioners don't need to run as often, resulting in gas and electric savings. Low-e coatings block harmful UV rays which prevent carpeting and furniture from fading. A quieter living environment results with multi-pane windows and the value of a home increases. But, it's not all positive, costs have increased rather steeply as a result of the new standards and, while it means the windows are working, exterior condensation may occasionally form. Some customers find that the lower solar heat gain in the spring keeps their home too cold into late spring requiring their furnace to keep running despite it being warm outside."

Most of us don't possess the arsenal of knowledge necessary to avoid making rookie (and expensive) mistakes by ordering and installing our own windows. This is where a reputable window expert can provide assistance. A number of window companies are able to provide design assistance, construction considerations as well as complete the installation. Does your project include replacing windows to fit existing openings? Does the current window show signs of fatigue (difficulty opening due to the house settling, significant drafts, insect infestation, etc.). Will the project require gutting the window opening



to the studs and reconstructing? Does your project include changing window sizes or adding a window where one doesn't currently exist? Does your project include full house window replacement? Add in frame color and material (vinyl, wood, fiberglass), type and size plus any special features and it's easy to become overwhelmed. Curt Visser, Owner, Property Revolutions and Howe Patio & Windows, notes, "The number of options and choices that homeowners have today compared to even 5 years ago is amazing. Our job is to listen to what the homeowner wants and then make that happen for them."

Windows are a practical and aesthetic investment in your home. Consulting with a reputable window expert can address the functional aspects of adding or replacing windows, keep the project manageable as well as provide information that impacts the aesthetics of any window project. An informed decision will ultimately complement your budget, your home's design and your personal style.

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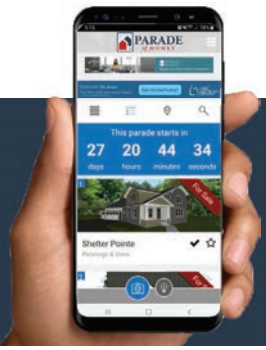
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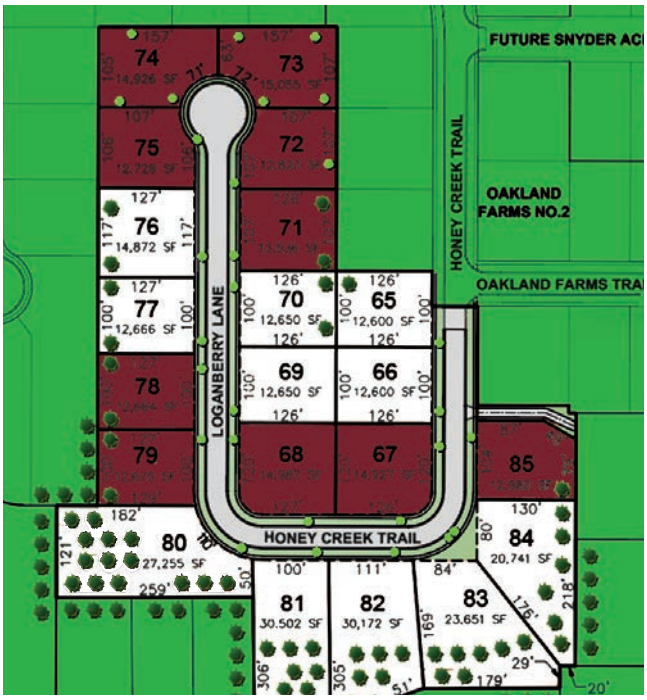
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