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BOWLING GREEN Home Lifestyle

Bowling Green Home & Lifestyle
Published and distributed by
Bowling Green Daily News
813 College St.,
Bowling Green, KY 42101
www.bgdailynews.com

Production Representative

FARAGO & ASSOCIATES

29200 Northwestern Hwy., Ste. 114
Southfield, MI 48034
(248) 546-7070 / FAX (248) 499-1716

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Spring brings an inspiring and natural bouquet across Bowling Green for us all to appreciate. The beauty and undeniable palette of colors pepper the plains for us to note and enjoy. Photography by Lauren Ferragut. *

s p a r k



Top: Prairie Rose, Wood Lily, Cone Flower
 Middle: American Vetch, Blanket Flower, Canada Anemone
 Bottom: Wood Lily and Prairie Anemone, Crocus, Full Bloom Crocus

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DIY advice for home projects

A lesson for us all

BY **BERNIE ERICKSON**

The key to effective do-it-yourself projects is the appropriate ratio of self-confidence to self-awareness.

Example: I have an unlimited well of creativity (self-confidence) along with a 2-year-old's ability to follow detailed instructions (self-awareness.)

This year, I realized that even though I'm now closer to 100 years old than I am to 2 years old, I could probably squeeze one more home exterior paint job out of this tired body—while I still have the ripped dad bod to do it.

We have every possible power tool known to man.

This exterior paint job was going to call for some serious power tool additions. Any job worth doing is worth doing right,

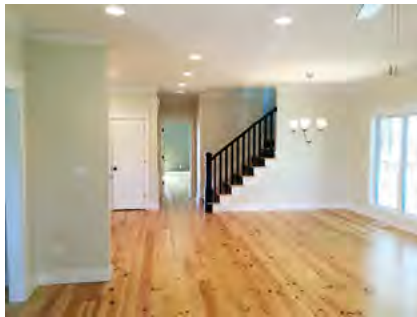


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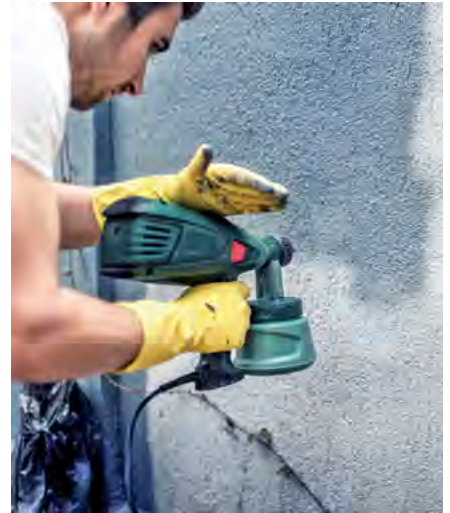
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The key to effective do-it-yourself projects is the appropriate ratio of self-confidence to self-awareness.



and everyone knows a paint job is only as good as the prep work and the quality of equipment and materials used to complete the project.

Since we no longer drive cars that drip oil on the garage floor and the allure of washing the car in the driveway passed years ago, I've never felt the need to own a power washer—until now.

If I was going to adequately prepare the cedar siding for a fresh coat of paint, I would need to remove every speck of grime and peeling paint. And that wasn't going to happen with a bucket of sudsy water and a wire brush. It was going to require the most powerful pressure washer with the highest PSI rating known to man.

A two-story colonial has major surface area and lots of big windows with tall, narrow shutters. To reach every nook and cranny to appropriately paint and seal this 20-year-old cedar siding requires a paint sprayer.

And not just any paint sprayer—the most powerful paint sprayer available to man.

A steep roofline and soaring peaks characterize two-story colonials. Painting peaks that high does not require a ladder; it requires a hydraulic lift. *And not just any hydraulic lift—the most powerful hydraulic lift known to man.*

First stop: home improvement store.

The only thing I knew about pressure washers was that I wanted the biggest and most powerful. There were most certainly specks of paint on our house just waiting to flake off in the next year or two, leaving exposed wood and mocking my ability to properly prepare the surface for paint. I wanted to blast those paint flecks into the neighbor's yard.

I decided the one with the highest PSI, red circles with slashes, yellow exclamation points and skull and

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crossbones would probably do.

Same with paint sprayers. The one with the plastic jar on the bottom that screwed onto the power unit would not be up to the task of painting this house. I needed a sprayer powered by an air compressor with a 50-foot hose that stretched back to a 5-gallon bucket of top-quality paint.

I picked up a 5-gallon bucket of oil-based primer and a 5-gallon bucket of white satin-finish paint and was on my way.

First thing on my list: pressure-wash every speck of grime and peeling paint off the house and shutters. I got everything hooked up, put a strong cleaning solution in the detergent intake and fired up the gasoline-powered engine.

I thought PSI rating had something to do with the velocity of water flowing through the nozzle. It really stands for "peels shutters instantly," as the moment the spray jet touched the edge of the shutter, it was ripped off the wall and sent flying into the street like a giant boomerang. *Great—only 16 more windows to go.*

I'd never actually had the opportunity to operate a hydraulic lift. I thought a little practice operating the controls from the ground rather than on the platform might be a good idea.

Self-awareness prevailed.

I loaded the paint buckets, the sprayer head and power unit onto the platform and turned on the power to the lift.

The cool thing about the most powerful hydraulic lift available to the nonprofessional public is that it has a variable-speed lift and can rise to the highest point really quickly.

They can raise things so quickly that when you realize you're about to hit the peak of the house and decide to stop, the stop is so quick that the paint bucket and all the equipment go skidding off under the platform rail and crash to the ground.

Maybe a little less self-confidence and a little more self-awareness might have been in order.

A week later, the house looked great, and daily mowing of the lawn had started to dissipate some of the white paint spatter.

It would have been much more cost effective to bring in the pros to do the paint job, but the sense of accomplishment I received from squeezing one more paint job out of this tired old dad bod put a couple more check marks in the self-confidence column—maybe one or two in the self-awareness column.

Here's hoping you find your perfect balance in summer home improvement projects. ✨



Naturally Clean for Spring

A surprising way to make spring cleaning simple



Wiping away the grime of winter doesn't have to mean launching an attack with dangerous chemicals. As you tackle this year's spring cleaning chores, take a note from Mother Nature and rely on the cleaning power of a surprisingly effective natural product: vinegar.

During the last century, vinegar has become increasingly recognized as a low cost and eco-friendly household product. From cooking and canning, to cleaning items indoors and out, homeowners are discovering that this eco-friendly, acetic liquid is as versatile as it is useful.

"Cleaning with vinegar has always been an effective way to banish dirt and grime in kitchens, bathrooms, the garage and the outdoors," said Mike Smith, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Mizkan Americas, the makers of Four Monks Cleaning Vinegar.

Despite its strong cleaning power, vinegar does have one downfall: its distinctive odor. You can experiment with dozens of DIY recipes online to overcome this dilemma, or you can rely on a store-bought non-toxic cleaning vinegar such as Four Monks, which is made

from a proprietary process that reduces the strong aroma and leaves a clean, crisp scent.

Learn how vinegar can make it easier to tackle common tasks around the house with these hacks and discover more uses for cleaning vinegar at VinegarTips.com.

In the Kitchen

Clean off the blades of a well-worn can opener with an old toothbrush soaked with vinegar to help remove dirt and grease.

Clean your ice/water dispenser by running vinegar through the system. Flush the vinegar out by running water through the system for 30-60 seconds.

Rid your dishwasher of mineral buildup by pouring half a cup of vinegar into the reservoir and running an empty cycle. You can also use vinegar in the dishwasher instead of another glass cleaner to keep your glassware sparkling.

Renew sponges and dishrags by placing them in just enough water to cover them. Then add one-fourth cup of vinegar and let them soak overnight.

Remove dark stains on an aluminum pot by boiling two cups of vinegar. For stained and smelly plastic food containers and lunchboxes, wipe them with a cloth dampened with vinegar.

To clean a grease-splattered oven door window, saturate it with vinegar. Keep the door open for 10-15 minutes before wiping with a sponge.

Deodorize the garbage disposal by pouring in half a cup of baking soda and half a cup of vinegar. Let sit for five minutes then run hot water down the disposal.

Avoid using toxic chemicals where you store food; wipe up spills in the fridge with vinegar.



Prevent lint from clinging to clothes by adding half a cup of vinegar to the wash cycle.



Here's my to-do list for the year!

- Put new lighting in the Living Room
- Remodel Kitchen
- Find out what's wrong with the ceiling fan
- Hook up the new pool
- Move the hot tub to the side deck - don't forget to hook it up!

Love, Mom

Dad's To-Do List:

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Vinegar can be created from nearly any product containing sugar; fruit and grains, such as barley and corn, are common sources of vinegar.



In the Bathroom

Rid a faucet of lime deposits by tying a plastic bag containing one-third to one-half cup of vinegar around it and leaving it there for two or three hours. Wipe down with a sponge and scrub any remaining deposits with an old toothbrush. The same approach can be used to remove buildup on a showerhead.

The fizzing combo of vinegar and baking soda can unclog and remove odor from a tub drain. Pour half a cup of baking soda in the drain, then follow with two cups of hot vinegar. Immediately plug the drain with a rag to keep the bubbles contained for 10 minutes. Rinse by pouring a kettle of boiling hot water down the drain.

Spray shower doors with vinegar after you've squeegeed the glass – or before you turn on the water – to help release hard water deposits.

Clean shower door tracks by filling them with vinegar and letting it sit for a few hours. Pour hot water into the tracks and scrub away any remaining film with a toothbrush.

To make the toilet bowl sparkle, pour in a cup or more of vinegar and let it sit for several hours or overnight. Scrub well with the toilet brush and flush.

Remove old bathtub decals with vinegar heated in the microwave.

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In the Laundry Room

Remove coffee and tea stains by flushing the area with vinegar, rinsing and repeating. For wine stains, saturate the spot with vinegar and allow it to stand for several minutes. Then, wash as normal. Tip: For more delicate fabrics or precaution, test on an inconspicuous part of the garment first.

Restore yellowed clothing by soaking garments overnight in a solution of 12 parts warm water and one part vinegar. Wash them the following morning.

Soak new garments in a few cups of vinegar for 10-15 minutes before washing to stop dyes from running in the wash.

If frequent ironing has left your iron plate dirty, make a paste from one part vinegar and one part salt to scrub it clean.

Remove scorch marks from an iron by rubbing it with a warm solution of equal parts vinegar and salt. If that doesn't work, use a cloth dampened with vinegar.

Forgot that you left wet laundry in the machine and it now smells moldy? Pour a few cups of vinegar in the machine and wash the clothes in hot water. Then run a normal cycle with detergent to rinse the clothes.

Prevent lint from clinging to clothes by adding half a cup of vinegar to the wash cycle.

What Is Vinegar?

Vinegar is the acetic liquid that results when a product containing sugar is allowed to ferment. Vinegar can be created from nearly any product containing sugar; fruit and grains, such as barley and corn, are common sources of vinegar.

The ingredients in vinegar depend on the type of vinegar produced. For example, Four Monks uses distilled vinegar processed from corn, so it's safe for your family. All vinegars are diluted with water to the preferred acidity before bottling. Four Monks has 6 percent acidity, which is 20 percent stronger than traditional vinegar, but gentle on everyday surfaces. This acetic quality is what enables vinegar to effectively clean while being safe for the body and the environment. *

Photos courtesy of Getty Images

Rid your dishwasher of mineral buildup by pouring half a cup of vinegar into the reservoir and running an empty cycle. You can also use vinegar in the dishwasher instead of another glass cleaner to keep your glassware sparkling.



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5 Ways to Spruce Up Your Home for a Quick Sale

BY TRACEY FISH

Spring is finally here! People are coming out of hibernation. OK, maybe that is just me. For some, this will be a season of change, and I'm not just referring to foliage. Many homeowners will be putting their houses on the market and hoping for a quick sale before the back-to-school dash. We've been in that season a couple of times in the last few years.

We tried selling our rental property a few years ago, and after quite a period of time ended up taking it off the market and listing it for rent. While we were disappointed at the time that the property didn't sell, it ended up being a blessing in



disguise. When we found out we were relocating, we were able to live there during the transition period. We were so thankful that when the time came to list the house for sale that we received an offer within two days that led to the sale of the house.

We spent time before we listed prepping the house for showing. There are five changes we made that I believe led to the quick sale of our home the second time around. Even if you do not have a house that you are preparing to sell, these are simple DIY projects that will improve your resale value for the future and may help you find a new love for the home that you have.

Update Cabinets and Vanities

When we took the plunge to paint the kitchen cabinets, we sent the kids to their grandparents' house for the weekend and painted the cabinets white and the island cabinets a contrasting charcoal color. We also replaced the knobs and drawer pulls. This was a huge update, especially because you could see the kitchen immediately after entering the house. Big windows gave lots of natural light and with the white cabinets brightened and opened the feel of the entire living area. The bathrooms had the same style of cabinets, so we updated the vanities as well. You can check out the blog for DIY tips.

Paint

If your house has not been painted in eight years or more or if you have bold colors that may not appeal to buyers, I recommend you update your walls if you are planning to sell. Neutral beiges or grays and whites with gray or beige undertones are on trend. We updated with Benjamin Moore's Northern Cliffs, Revere Pewter and Silver Gray.

Update Fixtures

The builder installed cheap brass everything throughout the house. Buying updated light fixtures for the entire house was not within our budget, so we replaced some of them, and we spray painted the rest. We took the fixtures down, taped off the important stuff and spray painted

Many homeowners will be putting their houses on the market and hoping for a quick sale before the back-to-school dash.

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Create a welcoming entry with a pretty wreath or urn of flowers. Also, make sure that your door and door frame are clean and fresh looking.

them with Rustoleum's Oil Rubbed Bronze. There are really fun options with spray paint, including metallic or matte finish and different textures. We also updated all of the doorknobs and hinges to bronze. Those hinges really add up! I wouldn't recommend spray painting doorknobs, but if you are on a tight budget, you could spray paint the hinges.

Other updates we made included buying framed mirrors and new faucets and bath fixtures. There are lots of helpful YouTube tutorials on how to change these out yourself.

Declutter and Organize

Go through every corner and closet of your house with new eyes. De-clutter and clean out. Keep only items that are useful or that you love, and clear out the rest. Use baskets or bins to hide organized stuff in closets. Stage your shelves, and clear off tabletops and counters as much as you can.

Make Your Entry Pretty

Create a welcoming entry with a pretty wreath or urn of flowers. Also, make sure that your door and door frame are clean and fresh looking. Make sure to get rid of the winter grit or dog hair that might be lingering in the corners. Buy a new welcome mat and make an awesome first impression.

My hope is that you are enjoying the freshness of spring, inside and out! Spring and summer are busy project times for us, so be sure to follow the Facebook page and blog for more tips and inspiration. *

For help and inspiration on decorating on a budget and DIY restoration projects, check out Tracey's blog at: madenewhomefurnishings.wordpress.com. And follow her Facebook page: Made New Home Furnishings.



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Figuring Out the Cost Per Square Foot



Q: *Tim, why do builders have such difficulty when asked how much their homes cost per square foot?*

A: Ask any farmer what a bushel of wheat costs, and he'll have an instant answer for you. Similarly, the price of a barrel of oil and an ounce of gold are common knowledge, with costs quoted down to the last cent. But try asking a homebuilder about the "cost per square foot" to build a home, and you'll likely get any number of responses, including lowball guesses, unhelpfully vague price ranges, or even outright irritation from the respondent. Why is new home construction so different?

The disconnect stems from the fact that in residential construction, there is no agreed-upon standard for what constitutes a square foot. For example, do builders only include finished square footage in their estimates? Do they count unfinished basements? Does a square foot include the garage and deck? What about the landscaping or a pool? Therein lies the complication: It's up to each builder to decide for themselves.

For illustration, consider the hypothetical Smith residence. The Smith family wants a rancher with 2,000 square feet on the main level, an unfinished basement, a three-car garage (700 square feet), and a covered porch (200 square feet). Simple enough, right? The savvy Mr. Smith, seeking more than one opinion, meets with two separate builders and asks them, independently, what they would charge him per square foot to build his dream home.

Builder A looks at the project and considers it a 4,000-square-foot home because, after all, while the basement will be unfinished, it is nonetheless

conditioned space and thereby "countable." He also reasons that all of his homes generally have a 200-square-foot covered porch with a three-car garage, an integral part of the house. His price? Only \$100/square foot.

Builder B looks at this very same layout but considers it a 3,417-square-foot home after using "tried and true" math. He counts the main-level area (2,000 square feet) at full value, the basement and garage at half value (1,000 square feet and 350 square feet), and the covered deck at one-third value (67 square feet). He presents his reasonable cost to build the Smith Residence: \$117/square foot.

That's a difference of \$17/foot between the two, and their calculations are 583 square feet apart—and they're both right. Notice that despite the disparities mentioned, they've both quoted a home that costs about \$400,000. Builder B just looks more expensive, on paper.

This scenario plays out in real life all the time. Unfortunately, it often results in a homeowner selecting a builder based on who can provide the "lowest cost per foot" without taking into account the bigger picture.

Each builder, when presented with plans and specifications, is able to implement unit costing and vendor quotes to arrive at a total construction cost. At the end the day, the square-foot cost is largely incidental.

Perhaps someday a standard will be developed that precisely describes what is included in a cost-per-square-foot measurement. But until then, we should shift our focus to the professional builder's reputation for building high-quality homes and remodels for happy customers. After all, isn't this the measurement we're really searching for? *



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↑ The façade of this Providence Homes entry into the greens at Olde Stone, features a dynamic roofline trimmed in cedar along with painted brick and a stone perimeter.

← At the back of the home, an upstairs deck was added off the bonus room to provide amazing views of the greens as well as cover for the porch below. This double decker style outdoor area increases the impact without enlarging the footprint.

↗ A bead board ceiling and real working shutters enhance the appeal of this cozy front porch.

WRITTEN BY **MARIKA KUTCHINS**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JOE IMEL**
LAYOUT BY **M. SCHOFDING**



If You Want Something Done Right...

There are certain times when being a control freak is a good thing. Heart surgeons, for example, need to always be right. And if home is where the heart is, homebuilders also need to know how and when to take the reins of a project.

At Providence Homes in Bowling Green, builder Steve Nelson is never afraid of rolling up his sleeves and directing his subcontractors at anything from pouring the foundation to building a chimney. His homes are a direct reflection of his ability to control the process from beginning to end, and it doesn't hurt that Nelson's wife, Liz, is an accomplished interior decorator who can pull together architectural and decorative details.

Homeowners Mike and Judy Martin enjoyed having the Nelsons on-site and on point. Mike mentions the professionalism, their attention to detail and the way Steve and Liz



↑ High Ceilings, detailed construction, and quality appointments give the newly constructed home an established ambiance.

← Relocating the fireplace to a corner of the great room frees up the space of the wall and allows for unobstructed views.

↓ Granite countertops, tile across the backsplash and stainless steel appliances, make the kitchen sparkle.

↗ The geometric precision of the staircase serves as a dramatic focal point. Both down stairs and up, inside and out, this Providence Home at Olde Stone combines the best of both.

→ Pairing black and cream in the formal dining room softens the contemporary styling and transitions well to the colors in the adjoining great room.

→ → The open floor plan brings together the great room, the gourmet kitchen and the breakfast nook, which has easy access to the back porch. Plenty of natural light enhances the custom details.





profiled in Home and Lifestyle Magazine in September 2012.

They liked the design and the details and thought it would be the perfect home for a golf course lot at Olde Stone. For two years, both couples met periodically to discuss the project. And having built several homes in the past, Judy and Mike recognized the benefit of working with such a hands-on team.

Of course, with any good control freak, there's always room for improvement. So it stands to reason that the blueprints were tweaked to accommodate the Martins. They wanted a hall entry for the master that extended the footprint. Steve's new design incorporated a laundry room, a powder bath, and a built-in computer nook that he sketched on the fly. Upstairs, it became obvious that the golf course views would be ideal if they added a full deck above the backyard patio. The result is a larger home that blends indoors and out just off the greens with plenty of room for the Martins to host friends and family.

Each client is unique, so each home should be, too, says Liz.

The façade features a cozy covered porch tucked between the entryway opposite a double-vaulted roofline that accommodates a large garage and offers a dormer into an upstairs attic space. Painted brick, native stone, wood trim and working shutters give it curb appeal.

Inside the foyer, diffused light from a rectangular pattern of leaded glass on the front door illuminates the rich detail of the palette, which Liz defines as traditional design in a contemporary hue.

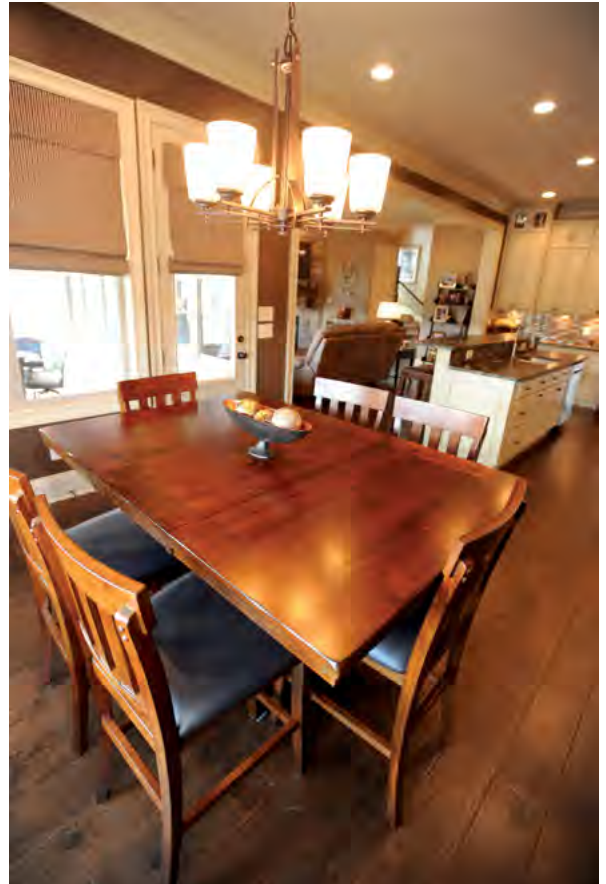
From here, a perfectly scaled staircase provides a series of flights and landings that expertly directs the eye toward the crown molding and detailed craftsmanship that is a hallmark of a Providence Home.

Liz explains that the homebuilding process is similar to a giant puzzle. When the pieces start to come together, they impact one another. And it helps that Steve never asks anything of his contractors that he can't also do himself. "He came in on a Saturday to do the steps with his guys. 'This is tricky. I want to make sure it's done right,'" she recalls him saying.

In addition to keeping a staff of full-

work as a team. "We could recommend them to anyone who is looking for a builder," he says.

Builder and client came to work together two years ago, after the Martins saw a Providence Homes project that had been



time carpenters rather than utilizing self-employed subcontractors, Steve is what his wife calls a “lost breed.”

“He’s not a middleman. Steve is a true homebuilder. He can jump in with the foundation guys or the roofers or framers and get those details to be exactly the way you thought it would be,” she says.

Judy says that one of their primary goals for the project was to have an absolutely open floor plan. To accomplish this, they designed a large combination great room, kitchen and breakfast area and relocated the fireplace to create two full walls of windows, which help incorporate the patio and capture the views. Ten-foot-tall ceilings throughout enhance the scale and lend a very comfortable circulation.

“We had so many people—even under construction—come in and say, ‘That’s fantastic,’” Judy remembers.

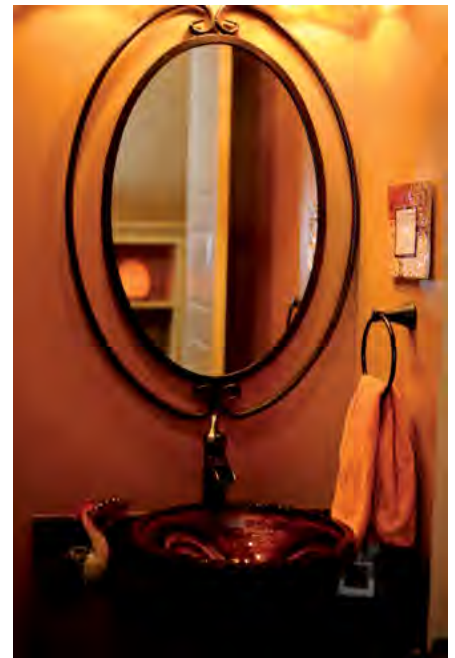
As Steve directed his crew, Liz was busy working with Judy to ensure that all the architectural details of this 3,600-square-foot classic contemporary were consistent—classy without being predictable. In the kitchen, for example, the traditional elements such as granite and

tile are kicked up a notch. Instead of being simply black granite, there are veins of sparkling gold and bronze. It’s metal meets root beer meets basic black and cream. The “bling,” as Judy calls it, makes her question whether she might share an affinity with mythical creatures. When asked if she ever considered the possibility of having been a dragon in a past life, she laughs and says perhaps her love of shine and polish indicates she may be one in this life.

Whatever the case, the home is a direct reflection of the owners’ taste and the ability of Providence to deliver. Judy says that as they worked so closely, she and Liz got very good at making design decisions. They never simply selected an entire showroom and staged its components. Instead, they discussed in detail which tile, which granite, which fixtures and what type of lighting would achieve the look Judy wanted.

“None of this came from the same place,” Judy explains. “It’s not like you walked into a showroom and said, ‘OK, I’ll take this display.’”

And it didn’t hurt that Steve could “morph” the entire project in real time. For



↑ This downstairs guest bath was appointed “on the fly” when homeowner and decorator Liz Nelson pulled together elements from a variety of sources

↓ The artistry of the construction is reflected in the finished project, which combines tile, granite, wood trim and beveled glass in a beautifully appointed master bath.





example, Judy claims she isn't good at abstracting a design. "I'm not good with dimensional things," she says. So when it came time to customize the master closet, Steve literally sketched the entire plan onto the walls before he began to build it.

"When you work with Steve, you're going to get good closets," she says.

And whenever there was an opportunity to frame and finish a space, Steve took it. "We don't like to waste space," says Liz, which helps explain the linen closets and niche displays as well as the spice cabinets and custom curios in the kitchen.

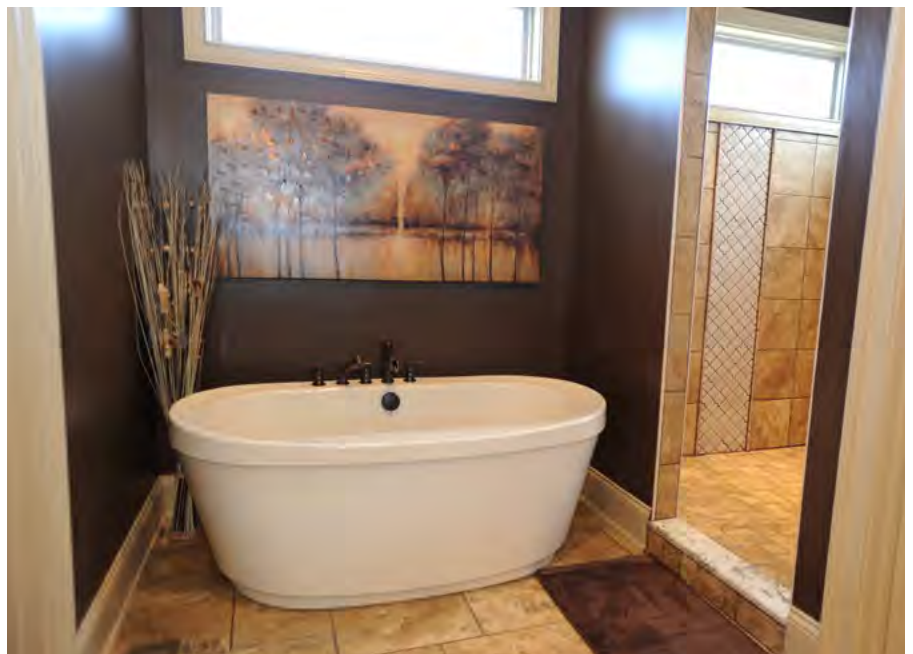
On moving day last November, family obligations kept Judy from Bowling Green. Mike could have managed, but the Nelsons wouldn't have it. So instead of leaving Mike with the lion's share of the work, "Liz said something like, 'Don't worry about your breakables. We'll take care of it,'" recalls Judy. Liz got a crew and a couple of trailers and in half a day they had moved the Martins into their new home and were busy unpacking, hanging pictures and even folding the clothes.

Naturally Judy didn't want to impose, so she asked her husband to wait until she returned to worry with certain details. "Tell Liz not to worry about things in the master closet," Judy remembers telling her husband.

But it was too late. "She's already in the closet folding the clothes," he says. ✨

↑ Distressed wood flooring minimizes wear and tear while it adds a warm luster to the entire home

↓ A freestanding tub and walk in shower mean classic lines and easy clean up in the master bath.





Shining a Light on Cultural Differences

BY BETTY SPARKS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DALTON PUCKETT



↑ Briarwood Elementary student Chadrac Elese shows off his name in Chinese characters during the lantern painting class at the gallery.

Artist Ling Sun practices traditional painting in a world that is quickly changing. Her tenure in Bowling Green is courtesy of the Confucius Institute and its partnership with WKU.

The Shanghai native has spent almost two years in Kentucky, helping students young and old become more familiar with Chinese language and customs. In turn, Sun has become familiar with American language and customs.

This two-way street is designed to foster partnerships both personal and professional. When Sun returns home in May, she plans to share her experiences with colleagues as well as stay in contact with her American friends via social media and email. And she hopes to host them when they visit China.

In China, Sun teaches art appreciation at the college level. Here in Bowling Green, her primary focus has been younger students through collaborative efforts at area schools, most recently the Plum Tree Montessori School.

The experience has made her realize how culture influences behavior. In China, she says, the most difficult period for students isn't college course work,



← Ling Sun introduced highlights of the Chinese cultural landscape, during an evening class in traditional painting.

↑ A small group took home a Chinese paper lantern, and a lot of good will during a recent class at Gallery 916 in Bowling Green.

but rather it begins in primary school. Young students are expected to study almost constantly for many years with the goal of reaching college, but after that, their attitudes can become much more relaxed.

In the United States, it is the reverse. She sees young students who are free to explore academic and creative pursuits until they reach college, at which point they are expected to carry a much heavier course load.

The partnership that WKU has with the Confucius Institute also affords American students the opportunity to study in China. Taylor Prochazka is one such student, and his experiences support Sun's assessment.

Prochazka is a senior in economics, international relations and Asian studies at Tianjin Normal University, near Beijing. He also has been surprised by a reversal of roles. For Chinese students, college life is less rigorous than it is for their American counterparts. "In high school, Chinese students have a workload that is beyond imagination for a lot of people. As students start preparing for the gaokao (College entrance exam) ... (they) will work on school nearly every hour of the day, nearly every day. This is not an exaggeration," he says.

But when they reach college, "they

are sort of given a free pass," according to Prochazka. He says he and fellow American students abroad were surprised to find that during college-level classes, "many people were very obviously sleeping or playing on their phones."

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The Shanghai native has spent almost two years in Kentucky, helping students young and old become more familiar with Chinese language and customs.

When it comes to art education, there is also a distinct difference between the behaviors, according to Sun. She says American students are offered more opportunities to be creative in their art interpretation, whereas in China, there is a very deliberate and traditional protocol that emphasizes symbols and methods that have remained unchanged throughout the ages.

Recently, Sun taught a lantern painting class at Gallery 916 on State Street. Here, students young and old participated in what Chinese people do traditionally, which is paint and display paper lanterns. Gathered around a small table and surrounded by art, the participants got a quick lesson in Chinese history and culture. Sun showed pictures of important landmarks and answered questions about the differences she sees between the two countries.

Then the brushes came out, and the painting began. Sun displayed a model of a paper lantern and helped her students get familiar with the symbols and the technique of holding the brush. She says that in China, it is not uncommon for the teacher to peruse the rows of desks, and if a student is seen holding the brush incorrectly, yank it from the student's grasp to prove the point that the brushes should be held straight up and down and very gently.

According to Sun, the Lantern Festival falls on the last day of the Chinese New Year celebrations. She says that during the festival, young people will bring their lanterns to what is essentially a town square and hang them from posts, helping illuminate the scene. This is an opportunity for single people to meet and mingle with each other with the hope that they will fall in love, she says.

When asked if she had pictures of her Chinese students to share with readers of this magazine, Sun said she hadn't thought about it that way. "In China, things are very normal, so I don't think to take a picture. But in the United States, things are different, so I take pictures a lot," she laughs. ✨

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Robert Tobias and Amanda Crawford like to be surrounded by books, bookworms, art, artists, music, musicians and everything else that matters most.

Walking Your Talk Without Leaving the Porch ~ FFOYA House Celebrates the Politics of Place

BY MARY NESTOR | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DALTON PUCKETT



↑ The free library is curated by FFOYA House to focus on the classics. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* was one recent exchange.

The Chamber of Commerce measures success by charting trends like job growth and revenues raised, but there are other ways to quantify a vibrant infrastructure. And if Robert Tobias and Amanda Crawford have a say in the matter, the definition of a successful economic model for their newly adopted hometown will definitely come with a backbeat.

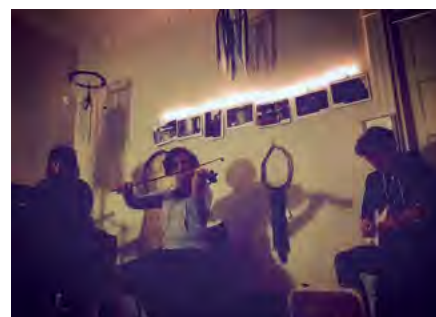
Crawford and Tobias, or Amanda and Toby, as they prefer to be known, have quickly become an essential part of the downtown district. She is a journalist on tenure track at WKU teaching writing and reporting, as well an accomplished lyricist. They met in Phoenix, Arizona, where Toby, a lifelong musician whose work has been

described as perfect for “a darkened room and an open mind,” fronted the band Former Friends of Young Americans.

After moving to Bowling Green almost two years ago, Amanda and Toby established FFOYA House, which on the surface is a funky recording studio in a converted Victorian on Kentucky Street where they offer a sliding scale to local musicians to produce studio quality tracks for distribution to a larger audience. But their real mission is to make connections across a landscape of musicians, poets, fine artists and even farmers with the ultimate goal of establishing a network of people in support of progressive causes.

From the free library box at the gate to

At a recent concert at the Phoenix Theatre, the under 21 crowd was treated to an affordable local concert series.



the wraparound front porch that doubles as a stage to the raised bed permaculture gardens in the yard, FFOYA House is nothing if not collaborative.

“We believe that sustainability, progressive policy reform, fostering of the arts—that’s all kind of one thing, and we want to reinvent it and watch it thrive locally,” says Toby.

In March, they organized and hosted the House Show Hop, during which Tim Kercheville from Festina Lente Farms taught an urban farming workshop while poets read their work on the front porch. After a potluck dinner, they kicked off the music. “Music began here and circled around to other places,” explains Toby. “We pilfered some local musicians and created a marching band from one house to the next.”

Beats on the Ground

As working musicians, their professional associations opened their eyes to the inequities of the music industry, and they recognize the broader implications across the spectrum. Toby references what he calls the “working-class artists” whose very survival depends on the support of

their local communities.

According to Toby, local art and music fall under “the umbrella of things that are being threatened” because they are “not able to be monetized in our current climate.”

Part of the problem, they say, is inherent in the current economic model supporting the arts. It is much like the stock market that hates uncertainty. In other words, if an artist sells out stadiums, then all hands on deck will support that artist to make even more money. Hundreds of thousands of screaming teenagers may be surprised to learn that Taylor Swift is not the only person trying to make a living with a mic, but it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, according to Amanda, where fewer and fewer voices are heard and those that remain are showered with the spoils of success simply because that’s what the market demands.

The solution, they say, is to support local art and local artists in much the same way that the food industry has begun to do. Buying local is as important in art and music as it is in kale and cucumbers. Toby believes the

↑ FFOYA founders combine live music, original art and social activism to be sure that people know the importance of staying local.

money spent supporting local arts will pay dividends, especially if those efforts also recognize the important link between arts and social issues.

To further the cause, at FFOYA House, a large parlor has become a cozy reading room, while what was once the dining room has been repurposed as a commission-free gallery space. There is a sliding scale on the recording time, which allows bands who might pay thousands of dollars to record somewhere else to get their music out of their heads and onto the street. It makes working-class art accessible to the working-class consumer, explains Toby.

And that consumer is an important part of the equation. Buying local art allows local artists to continue to develop their craft. Toby argues that buying a mass-produced print is throwing away money that could really benefit a local artist. Spending \$50 on a discount-store Picasso print, he says, is just helping the corporate machine.

But you could really help the local artist by buying a \$20 or \$30 piece.

In addition to ensuring that fewer artists are the proverbial “starving artist,” buying locally also inspires innovation in the arts. As Toby points out, “A cover band playing ‘Mustang Sally’ is not helpful to the evolution of art.”

But by what he calls “staying close to home,” Toby argues that the local art and artists will flourish. “If you want to know how you can support a local artist, buy a local musician’s CD. Go to their shows. It will grow if you invest in it, but if you don’t, it stagnates.”

The Kids Are Alright

Part of their motive is their own 19-year-old son, who, like many of his contemporaries, would be hard pressed to find entertainment venues much less performance space in Bowling Green. The under-21 crowd is especially in need of support because they are vulnerable to the predatory financial model of the recording industry. In Nashville, Toby says, it isn’t uncommon for musicians to owe the house at the end of the night. Couple that conundrum with the fact that traveling bands often subsist on junk food and are paid in beer and chicken wings and even their attempts at healthy eating can be derailed by an industry that honors success with more success and eliminates voices that might otherwise be heard.

“We provide support and encouragement,” says Toby. “We want to work with musicians who can’t afford \$1,000 to record a track. Our focus is not necessarily stardom or celebrity. Our focus is music as a movement.”

Amanda sums it up: “Our moral compass was well evolved (by the time we relocated to Bowling Green), but we started seeing a community that has a really thriving independent music scene, and we saw they needed some support.”

Connecting the dots with arts and activism is a natural next step, Toby says. “We feel that we are part of this broader working-class that needs to kind of make a dramatic shift in our lifestyle by living sustainably. And we believe that the arts are a good vehicle for that message.” ❀



Photo courtesy of Dalton Puckett

Rock Around the Block

House Show Hop! took place in March, hosted by FFOYA House along with the Astronomy House, the Falcon’s Nest, and the Nightmare House. Festivities included a garden workshop to help urban farmers maximize their space as well as a potluck BBQ dinner. The organizers want to create a space for local art and artists to showcase their work and more importantly, enjoy the networking opportunities that occur when social activists sit down with artists and musicians.

In the evening, after a performance by Former Friends of Young Americans, musicians and activists took to the streets and formed a marching band that picked up and dropped off members as it traveled.

“Music, visual art, poetry — art has a voice that should enable you to get involved in your community,” says organizer Robert Tobias. “We serve as a juncture.”

In April, FFOYA House participated in the events surrounding the Take Back the Night initiatives that raise awareness and seek solutions for sexual and domestic violence. HOPE Harbor in Bowling Green organized the event here.

Amanda Crawford of FFOYA House points out that college towns like Bowling Green are in a unique position and have a responsibility to help raise awareness of the problem. ❀




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Spring safety

Protect your pets as seasons change

BY ASHLEY FERRAGUT JOHNSON

The tulip leaves are pushing their way through the cold ground, and the snow has begun to trickle down the streets as it melts. The sunbeams stretch out close enough to warm the skin. Yes, spring has begun the hard work of warming our frozen state.

The changing of the seasons is a great time to discuss ways to keep our pets happy and healthy as things begin to thaw. From heartworm prevention to car safety, there are many things we humans can do to protect our pets as summer

draws near.

Dr. Amy Anderson of West Fargo Animal Hospital in Fargo, North Dakota warns of the potential danger some common springtime items can pose to cats and dogs. “Lilies are extremely toxic to cats, especially the Easter lily variety,” she says. “Most cats are intrigued by live plants in the house, and most will try to chew on the leaves or flowers if given the chance.” Do not keep this plant in your home, as even small amounts can cause kidney failure in cats.

Decorative Easter grass can have some very serious implications if ingested by your pets. Because the stringy grass is not digestible, it can get caught and mangled inside the digestive tract. “This can lead to plication (think accordion-like folds) in the intestine, which causes obstruction and perforation of the intestinal wall,” says Dr. Anderson. She also urges pet owners to be mindful of chocolate being left behind by the Easter Bunny. Chocolate can wreak havoc on the GI system and can cause serious heart

disturbances. This is especially true for darker or baker's chocolate. If you have reason to suspect that your animal has consumed any amount of chocolate, you should take it to the vet right away.

As the temperatures continue to climb and the ground softens, people and their pets spend more time outside. These warmer days tend to bring along some uninvited guests. Fleas, ticks and heartworms can be harmful to your pets but can easily be avoided. Dr. Anderson urges pet owners to stay up to date on preventive flea and tick medicine like Frontline or NexGard. These medications can prevent Lyme disease and anaplasmosis, a disease spread by ticks that can affect red blood cells and the cardiovascular system.

It is also important to protect your pets against heartworms. Dr. Anderson explains, "Heartworm is a parasite that is transmitted from dog to dog by mosquitoes. Infected dogs in the area serve as a reservoir for infection, so give your dog a heartworm preventive monthly to kill any heartworm larvae that are introduced via a mosquito bite in the previous month."

Lake season is a time of year we all enjoy, but Dr. Anderson cautions, "When opening up the lake cabin for the summer, please remember to check for poisons that may have been put out last fall before you allow your pet to explore your property. Better yet, make a list in the fall of where everything was placed so that you can be sure to find all of it in the spring. If you don't find it, I can guarantee your pet will!"

Lastly, as the heat goes up, the windows come down. Who hasn't let their dog ride with its head out the car window, ears flapping in the wind? Though not uncommon, this activity can put your pet at risk. Flying debris can cause trauma to your pet, and dogs with sensitive ears are put at higher risk of getting ear infection. There is, of course, a more obvious hazard: dogs jumping or falling out of windows. "We have treated several dogs over the years for this, and some have fared better than others. Serious, life-threatening

injuries can occur from falling out of a car at any speed, and the other traffic is also a concern. If your dog is riding in the car with you, a harness that attaches to a seat belt is a great idea," says Dr. Anderson. It is also important to note that if you must put your pets in the bed of a truck, make sure they are in a protective kennel that is securely tied down.

Heed the advice of Dr. Anderson and your local veterinarian so you and your pets can enjoy a warm and safe spring together. 🐾

"When opening up the lake cabin for the summer, please remember to check for poisons that may have been put out last fall before you allow your pet to explore your property."

~ Dr. Amy Anderson,

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DISH



In praise of pasta and machines

PHOTOGRAPHY AND STORY BY
LAUREN FERRAGUT

Spring brings primavera, summer brings rich tomato sauces spiked with fresh basil, and fall brings roasted vegetables and hearty cream sauces, but the great common denominator through the changing seasons is pasta. It may be the ultimate comfort food because it can be dressed up or down and appeals to everybody. Young and old, people enjoy twirling the spaghetti, savoring the lasagna, or slicing into a fat pocket of stuffed ravioli.

My fiancé and I began making our own fresh pasta six years ago. Because we both have science backgrounds, we began by experimenting with various types of flour, oil, eggs, water and herbs while thinking about application: tender pasta dough for tagliatelle or something more structural for lasagna or short pasta.

The pasta dough we use most often requires six egg yolks to two cups of flour. We use it for ravioli and lasagna as it yields silky noodles that are substantial enough to support layers of tangy tomatoes, meat and cheese. The egg yolks give the dough a subtle egg flavor reminiscent of brioche and a dreamy rich-yellow hue.

Pasta is the foundation on which many meals are built. Making your own fresh pasta elevates any meal. To complement its tender texture, fresh pasta requires little more than a drizzle of floral olive oil, a squeeze of lemon and a generous toss of fresh herbs. The extra effort you put in will result in tender satisfaction that will provide endless meals to span all seasons.

← In less than a few pulses in the food processor, you can have a flavorful ravioli filling.



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Ravioli dough:

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour (more to dust)
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 5-6 egg yolks plus 1 whole egg
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

DIRECTIONS:

Combine flour and salt; make a well in mixture. Add the eggs and oil into the well and gradually incorporate the wet mixture into the flour with forks or fingers in a circular motion. Once combined, knead for about 6 minutes or until smooth and elastic. Let rest in fridge for 30 minutes.

Using a pasta machine is easy. Roll out the dough into a rectangle, and begin by feeding it through the machine's widest setting. As the dough is pressed out, use your free hand to hold the dough as it is coming through. Run it through the widest setting at least twice, if not three times. Continue this process for the remaining settings. Once you've finished, run it through your desired pasta style—fettuccine, spaghetti, etc.



Ravioli filling:

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 pounds carrots, peeled, halved and roasted
- 3 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup Swiss cheese, or whatever cheeses you may have
- 6-7 sprigs of fresh thyme

← I purchased my pasta machine at Creative Kitchen in Fargo for an affordable \$30, and it is easy to use!



→ After laying out your bottom layer of dough, dollop about 1 tablespoon of filling.

→ Take the second half of the rolled-out dough and place on top. Seal edges and between each ravioli with an egg wash.



→ We like to cut the shapes free form, but you can use a ravioli cutter or small biscuit cutter for a more uniform shape.



DIRECTIONS:

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Combine carrots, garlic, olive oil, salt and pepper on a sheet pan. Roast until fork tender, about 30 minutes. Once cooled, place in a food processor with egg, cheese and thyme. Pulse to combine. I added extra virgin olive oil to reach the consistency I like. You may also add whole milk or ricotta cheese. Dollop spoonfuls of filling onto prepared pasta dough and cover with remaining rolled-out dough. Seal with water and egg wash. Use a ravioli cutter or knife to make your desired ravioli shape. Boil in salted water for about 90 seconds or fry gently in butter. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and a shake of salt and pepper. Enjoy. *

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R---

REFLECTIONS

A local garden

What are you planting?

BY DAYNA DEL VAL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZACH DAVIS

Every late winter into early spring, I resolve to become a “real” gardener. I determine that we will get ahead of the weeds; we will remove the terrible rocks that are piled on top of clearly failing weed-detering paper that is laid over another pile of terrible rocks. We will create a tranquil oasis that is our backyard, and it will be glorious.

That’s late winter into early spring. Then one day, every mid-spring, I wake up, and the weeds have completely taken over the yard, the rocks appear more firmly embedded into the worthless paper, and I give up in despair before I ever really begin.

My grandparents had a glorious yard. It was mostly gardens—flower and vegetable. One wild-flower garden wended its way into a wonderful jungle of tomato plants and cornrows that moved into sky-reaching sunflowers and more.

There were little paths that ebbed and flowed with the gardens, flat rocks to skip over and wooden boardwalks to run down. The flagpole stood at attention in front of the hobby barn, and pretty geraniums surrounded the miniature Dutch windmill.

Birds and bees buzzed and darted in and around the whole yard, making it feel like a wonderland, and the earthy, floral smells were abundant.

But do you know what else I distinctly remember about being out in that garden? My grandparents were both always there, too. These gardens didn’t magically tend themselves. Taking care of them and making sure they were watered, weeded

and cared for was a full-time job.

Well, I already have a full-time job, and nothing in the job description mentions gardening. And there’s the issue of desire. Many summer mornings, I wake early and could choose to spend a little time in my backyard, but if I am in the middle of a good book, there’s no way I will pick weeds over reading. As I dig deeper into the pages, the weeds dig deeper into the soil.

Last summer, our backyard played host to two big events—our son’s graduation party and a house concert. We put up chairs and tables, moved some pots of flowers into pretty arrangements, and hoped no one would notice the less-than-stellar flowerbeds.

One of the kindest things anyone has ever said to me was, “I sat in your yard last night, and it was so beautifully manicured. It was a perfect setting for a wonderful event.”

You could have knocked me over. Where I saw the sad little bunch of wildflowers struggling to grow and the somewhat out-of-control hostas, he saw a welcoming place where good music, food and conversation happened.

Maybe I’m a better gardener than I give myself credit for. I will always long for a beautiful yard and gardens, but it’s really the people who are there that matter, and they are firmly planted and being well tended. I guess I’ll have to be content with that.*

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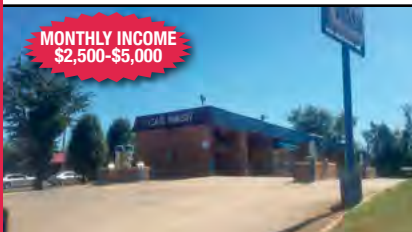
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