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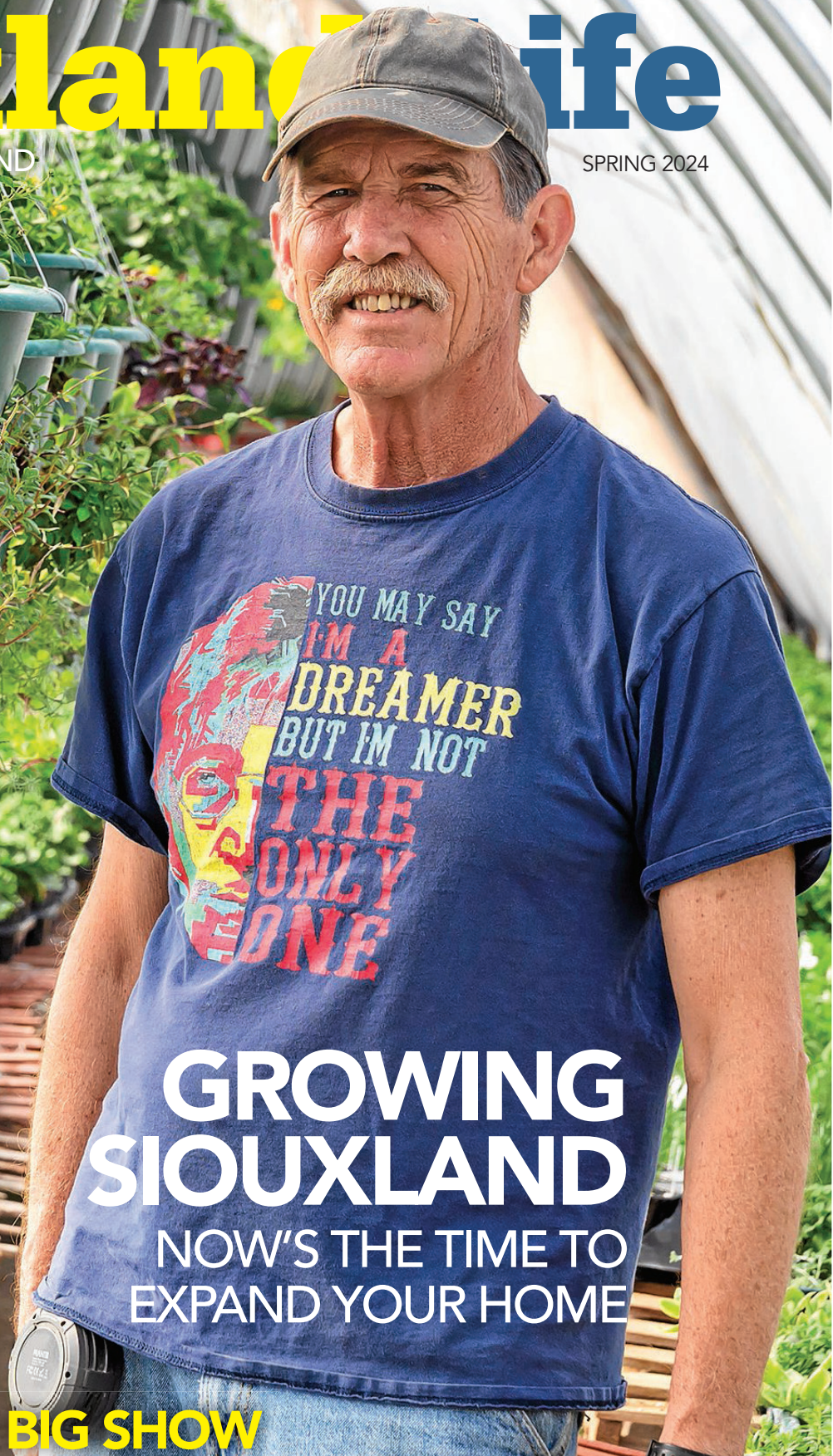
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Siouxland Life

Now's the time to take a second look at your home. What needs changing? What needs repairing? We've got lots of ideas – to add space and enhance. This month, we take a closer look at those artisans who can give you the place you've always wanted. We also have people we think you should meet. Pull out your pad and pen, start a "to do" list and get ready for a great summer.



ON THE COVER

Green Acres Greenhouse owner Gregg Schink is shown along a line of hanging baskets at his business west of Smithland, Iowa, along Highway 141.

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Your home can have all those quirky extras that just you need if you plan correctly and talk to the right people.



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If you've got a great idea, chances are the folks at this place can figure out how to make it.



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Country Celebrations has added a chapel, making its events center more popular than ever.

ADAPTABLE HOME

*With plenty of options,
house is suitable for most needs*

Photographs by Jesse Brothers | Text by Dolly A. Butz

With tasteful furnishings and attention to detail, a Whispering Creek homeowner transformed her modern ranch-style home into a “warm and elegant residence,” said Kathie Pfaffle, broker/owner of Haus of Home, a boutique company for buying and selling real estate in Siouxland and Okoboji.

“Being able to see it go from a vacant empty home without furnishings and, then, seeing it actually furnished elegantly and watching it go from being a house to a home, I think has been really fun for me,” Pfaffle said. “She has really nice taste and all of her furnishings are appropriate for the house and augment the design and daily living.”

The three-bed, two-bath home at 2655 Albatross Ridge is currently on the market and being presented by Pfaffle. She said the home, which was built in 2022 by Koskovich



Natural light illuminates the living room from both sides in this 2,105 square foot, ranch-style home in the Whispering Creek neighborhood of Sioux City.

This 2,105 square foot, ranch-style home at 2655 Albatross Ridge is located in the Whispering Creek neighborhood of Sioux City.



The kitchen has a warm, modern look in this 2,105-square-foot, ranch-style home at 2655 Albatross Ridge in the Whispering Creek neighborhood of Sioux City.



The kitchen has a warm, modern look in this 2,105-square-foot, ranch-style home in the Whispering Creek neighborhood of Sioux City.

& Murphy Development, is ideal for anyone looking for a new build and/or a low maintenance home on a golf course. Pfaffle described the 2,105-square-foot domicile, which overlooks hole 17 and the tee box of hole 18, as “versatile” and being able to accommodate a range of buyers, from empty nesters to families. The home, which sits on 0.82 acres, has an unfinished walkout basement and a spacious backyard with enough room for a pool.

“It’s not a two-story, so you don’t have to worry about steps. It makes it easier for it to be versatile for anybody, really,” Pfaffle said.

The main living spaces feature tray ceilings and matching light fixtures throughout, which Pfaffle said “adds to the cohesiveness of the space.” Stairs just off the foyer leading to the basement have custom metal railings. The home features 10 to 11-foot ceilings and rich, dark hardwood plank flooring with variable plank sizes.

“That gives it a hyper-custom feel, versus, a lot of times, you’ll see the same width,” Pfaffle said.



An open stairwell adorned with custom railings leads to a basement inside this Whispering Creek neighborhood home in Sioux City.



A dining area beside the kitchen features natural light in this 2,105-square-foot, ranch-style home in the Whispering Creek neighborhood of Sioux City.



This 2,105-square-foot, ranch-style home is located at 2655 Albatross Ridge in Sioux City.



The living room and kitchen feature hardwood floors and a tray ceiling.



Above: There is room to grow in the backyard of this 2,105-square-foot, ranch-style home in the Whispering Creek neighborhood of Sioux City.

Right: The primary en suite connects to a bathroom, walk-in closet and laundry room in this 2,105-square-foot, ranch-style

Below: The en suite bathroom features heated tile floors and a dual vanity leading to a walk-in closet and laundry room in this Whispering Creek home at 2655 Albatross Ridge.



Light pours through west-facing black aluminum windows into the open concept living room, dining room and custom kitchen. A covered concrete patio, which can be accessed from the dining room, provides expansive views of the golf course.

"The sunsets here are wonderful," Pfaffle said.

The living room has wood beam accents on the ceiling, an electric linear fireplace surrounded by tile and flanked by built-in cabinets.

"You don't always see built-ins on the sides, and these are different," Pfaffle said. "These have a lot of mass to them, which add to the oomph of the fireplace wall. So it really makes it stand out and pop."

Highlights of the kitchen include two-toned custom cabinetry from Dakota



The kitchen and living space is connected with an open layout.

Kitchen & Bath in Sioux Falls, a gas range, which the seller added, and GE appliances. Pfaffle said she appreciates that all of the light fixtures are from the same suite, which she said “really just brings everything together.” A large quartz island, which contains a dishwasher, sink and storage space also provides ample seating. The neutral tile backsplash’s shape and pattern is on trend, but Pfaffle also describe it as “timeless.”

“A lot of times you’ll see a wild color or something that shape-wise really sticks to a period. This, to me, is timeless,” she said.

Just off the kitchen is a pantry and a hallway, which leads to the spacious primary en suite. A tray ceiling, soaking tub, tiled walk-in shower, granite dual sink vanity, separate water and linen closets, and heated tile floor round out the space’s offerings. Off the bathroom is an over-sized walk-in closet. The laundry room is conveniently nestled between the walk-in closet and a mudroom, which has a door leading to the three-car garage.

“It’s very common in new builds,” Pfaffle said of the layout. “It’s nice to have this connected when you come home.”

There is plenty of entertaining space



The primary en suite connects to a bathroom, walk-in closet and laundry room in this Whispering Creek neighborhood in Sioux City.

outdoors, with a lower level patio that is plumbed with a gas line for grilling. Pfaffle said the unfinished basement offers additional sleeping and entertaining space.

“It’s plumbed for a bathroom and wet bar. You could put one or two bedrooms down there. There’s a lot of bonus space for hobbies, entertaining, so it’s a blank slate,” she said.



The primary en suite features a tray ceiling.

The walk-in closet leads into the laundry room in this Sioux City home.





Tri-State Softwash owner Clay Evans often takes his son Karter on service calls. The pair cover a large portion of Northwest Iowa, Northeast Nebraska and Southeast South Dakota.

GOODBYE TO PRESSURE WASHING

A new way to clean away exterior dirt and grime is by going soft

Text by Earl Horlyk | Photographs provided

The best way to clean off dirt and grime from an exterior surface may not be by going full-blast with a power washer.

Clay Evans, owner of Tri-State Softwash, said soft washing is a safer, more environmentally friendly alternative to pressure washing.

Ever better, the Paullina, Iowa, man said the wash will keep the surface shiny and clean for a longer period of time.



Dirt and black spots are inevitable on exterior siding. Tri-State Softwash's Clay Evans says softwashing is a safer, more environmentally friendly way of cleaning than power washing.

"Soft washing uses one-third of the water of pressure washing, lasts four-to-six times longer and doesn't erode the surface like pressure washing can," Evans explained. "Since it is gentler way of washing, soft washing can help extend the life of siding, steps, concrete, porches, decks, you name it."

This is why Evans, who started a business washing both residential and business surfaces in 2012, made the move to soft washing more than five years ago.

"We discovered that soft washing was a more versatile way of cleaning," he said.

It was also easier.

Evans and his crew uses an agricultural-type of spray that applies the soft washing solution.

"The solution does all of the cleaning," he allowed. "Absolutely no pressure is needed."

Unlike more traditional pressure washing that can blast up to 4,000 pounds per square inch (or PSI), soft washing uses a sprayer of around 80 to 85 PSI.

CLEANING UP!

WHAT: Tri-State Softwash, providing softwash services for residence and businesses in Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota

PHONE: 712-348-6574

ONLINE: tristatesoftwashing.com

"That means it is a lot gentler on your house and the landscaping than pressure washing," Evans said. "You can protect your property while keeping it clean."

Plus it stays cleaner longer.

"We use water-based biodegradable chemicals that emulsify dirt and grime, break down insect nests and webs as well as kill mildew, algae and bacteria," Evans said. "We do this while sanitizing the surface we're cleaning."

Which is important since power washing merely blasts surface growth away. Soft washing kills it at the root.

This includes black mold that can

grow on roofs.

"Mold on roof shingles is called *gloeocapsa magma* and can be detected by black streaks or stains," Evans said. "It is very dangerous because the mold hurts the integrity of the shingles. Not only that, it reduces the roof's ability to reflect UV rays, which can raise the cost of energy bills."

Over the years, Tri-State Softwash has provided residential and commercial services in Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota.

Evans said he's soft washed everything from diesel garage walls that were covered in grease and oil to churches with decades of buildup.

"You'd be surprised at how a good cleaning can make any property look brand-new," he said.

Unlike with pressure washing, a soft wash will do the trick without any fear of damage.

"More power isn't always better," Evans said. "Soft washing can do it better, safer and will keep surfaces cleaner longer."



A GROWTH INDUSTRY

*Varieties of plants abound
at Smithland greenhouse*

Text by Dolly A. Butz
Photographs by Tim Hynds

SMITHLAND, Iowa — For 40 years, Green Acres Greenhouse in Smithland has been providing hundreds, if not thousands of varieties of plants to customers.

“When you look at petunias, there are probably 25 to 30 varieties. There are probably 45 varieties of tomatoes. Just through all the different plants and different varieties, it adds up,” Owner Gregg Schink said, as he stood outside the production greenhouses at Green Acres, which is just west of Smithland on Highway 141.



LEFT: Owner Gregg Schink walks down an alley in a greenhouse in April at his Green Acres Greenhouse business west of Smithland, Iowa, along Highway 141. Schink grows plants in a series of 10 greenhouses.
ABOVE: Red geranium baskets are shown in April at Green Acres Greenhouse in Smithland, Iowa.

Schink has been gearing up for the busy spring season since the end of January. His property 19,000 square feet of growing space in 10 greenhouses.

The first step in the growing process is making sure everything in the greenhouse is in working order.

"The first greenhouse has a germination chamber for germinating seed and, then, you've got heat benches and mist systems for rooting cuttings. We'll root what we can of what comes in," said Schink, who said Green Acres used to root about 30,000 cuttings, but now roots only about 10,000 cuttings. "You make sure all those systems are working and, then, you start seeding right away perennial seeds and some of the ones that



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Owner Gregg Schink moves trays of plants at his Green Acres Greenhouse business west of Smithland, Iowa, along Highway 141.



“When you look at petunias, there are probably 25 to 30 varieties. There are probably 45 varieties of tomatoes. Just through all the different plants and different varieties, it adds up,”

Gregg Schink, Owner

take a long time.”

Green Acres Greenhouse is so popular, that, in years past, Schink said it wasn’t unusual to find customers on the property as early at 6:30 a.m. and as late as 10 p.m. In fact, just days before Green Acres was set to open for the season in mid April, Schink said a customer from Omaha stopped by.

“We open up this Saturday (April 13) and, then, we’re open all the way until late July,” said Schink, who said Green Acres is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 12 to 5 p.m. on Sundays. “Geraniums and petunias are real popular.”

Fertilizing plants is key, although Schink said people don’t like to do it.

“If you fertilize, it will do a lot better,” he said. “In a container a person’s watering all the time, you’re just leeching all the nutrients out. So, a person who just waters, waters, waters, it’s going to look poor in a month’s time.”

Schink said most plants in a container need fertilizer every third or fourth watering.

“That ends up being twice a week, if you’re watering every day, that you need to fertilize. The biggest thing is convincing people to fertilize, because it’s a chore. It’s easy to just go with the bucket or the



Owner Gregg Schink holds a hanging basket at his Green Acres Greenhouse business west of Smithland, Iowa, along Highway 141. Schink grows all his own plants (except for Boston ferns) in a series of 10 greenhouses

hose. The fertilizer takes more work, but your stuff will last all season long.”

Another thing Schink said people need to do with container plants is put them

in “the best place they can be.” Different plants have different requirements, so be aware of how much space and light your plant needs, as well as water and nutrients.

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Co-owner Jake Dykstra runs boards through a planer at The Wood Shop, a custom cabinet and woodwork business in Orange City.

BUILDING WHAT YOU WANT

Orange City's Wood Shop is a family business through and through

Photographs by Tim Hynds | Text by Jared McNett

ORANGE CITY, Iowa — It's a family affair for Jake, James and Josh Dykstra.

Since 2018, the three brothers have owned and operated The Wood Shop in Orange City where they make and install cabinets, countertops and fireplaces while also offering remodel work and Onyx fixtures. The division of labor between the brothers Dykstra is pretty

clear. Jake is a go-to project manager, James handles the books and Josh provides estimates, does the billing and runs the employees.

For several decades prior, their father, DeWayne, ran the business which started in the family garage in the early 1980s.

"We started playing in the shop,

sweeping the shop as kids," James said. The first thing he ever made on his own was a pinewood derby car. Josh's maiden build was a birdhouse which his grandmother still has.

James said as the brothers grew, they watched their dad move from a single-stall garage to a dairy farm west of Orange City where he and a partner got



Co-owner Jake Dykstra cuts a panel for a cabinet.

working together.

"And that's where they actually started the shop, expanding into more cabinets and stuff," James said.

The "stuff" part of what The Wood Shop offers these days can encompass quite a bit.

Just for the town, the brothers have made an old wooden hand pump, which can be seen in The Tulip Festival and windmills. "When you live in a community that's wrapped around the Dutch heritage, you get into some pretty strange things," Josh said.

They've also built desks and cedar beams for the Pizza Ranch headquarters in Orange City and done work in the Plymouth County Courthouse in Le Mars, where they had to remain as faithful to original designs and materials as possible.

As for individual customers, Josh said one of the more-recent strange requests The Wood Shop has gotten is for a waterfall which entailed putting a piece of granite on the wall (where the water rolls down) and surrounding the whole thing with cherry wood. Asked how long

it took, Josh gave a hesitant response.

"Uhhhh, yeahhhh," he said.

In late March, a major focus for Jake was completely gutting a two-story home. Interior. Exterior. Everything.

"That's a fun one," Jake said. "I like the big projects. I like taking on the whole entire project because I can control it and design it."

There's no real rhyme or reason to when The Wood Shop gets a request for a half-million dollar project for a man cave in Okoboji or a new stone countertop in a kitchen.

"They come and go. You'll get a big one and then you'll get your average ones and then you've got your smaller ones," Josh said. "If there's a very large project going, you just continue with that project but there are multiple projects running all at the same time."

For a kitchen, Josh said he would start with granite or quartz. The next big question would be: What's the budget?

"I can shoot you a number but if we're not even in the same ballpark it's not really worth pursuing," he said.

The radius for the jobs tends to be

about 50-to-70 miles wide. Josh said they end up at the Iowa Great Lakes a good deal as well as Cherokee, Le Mars and Sioux City. Materials come from distribution centers and hubs in Des Moines, Minneapolis, Omaha and Sioux Falls. Those entities purchase from the mills in the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains. For specialty pieces, Jake and James said they've used wood from Brazil and the Caribbean. A log cabin the brothers once worked required 22 different types of wood.

For staining, Josh said, The Wood Shop works with locals and has a mixing system.

"We actually mix our own stains," Josh said.

When it comes to colors, James and Josh said there are trends toward gray and green.

"But there are so many colors that are used in people's individual lives anymore and in their houses, right? They'll put a white kitchen in and they'll put rustic beams with rustic floating shelves and tile floors or they'll have LVT floors that are rustic," Josh said. "There's so



Co-owner Jake Dykstra tightens a clamp on a cabinet being built above and sands a board for a future home seen below.



Co-owners and brothers, James Dykstra, Josh Dykstra and Jake Dykstra own The Wood Shop, a custom cabinet and woodwork business in Orange City.



Drawers in the process of being built are stamped with The Wood Shop logo.

much contrast and so many different avenues that they've incorporated into houses anymore."

With respect to styles of door, Josh said flat panel, mission-style, Shaker-style doors are the thing.

"In the '80s and '90s, everybody did a raised panel. They did an eyedrop top. A cathedral top on their doors. You rarely see that anymore," Josh said.

Because of the proliferation of social media apps focused on home repair and entire channels such as HGTV, Josh said it can be a mixed bag when a customer comes through the doors of The Wood Shop.

"As far as Pinterest goes, I used to hate it. And all that stuff when they come in and they have the pictures or they have the concepts or this is what I like. It certainly makes my life easier because there's a direction," he said. "If they don't come with that, I'm literally trying to figure out what they want and a lot of times they don't even know what they want. They just want new cabinets. But when they come with a collage of things, or if they come with an inspiration picture, well now you have a direction. You have an avenue to chase down right now? Do they come in thinking they know more than you? Yeah, because they watched HGTV for 20 minutes when in reality it took six months."

Those apps can be kind to The Wood Shop though.

Josh said Facebook has helped dramatically improve the demand for The Wood Shop because the brothers can put the story of a remodel on their page.

"(It went from) their house was a disaster to WOW this is the end result," he said.

That ability to see work through is something the Dykstras all appreciate.

"Because we own both businesses (The Wood Shop and Dwellings in Alton), we get to actually see it from the beginning to the end," Josh said. "When we were working with dad then it was solely cabinets. So because it was cabinets you got there for some of the prep but mostly you worked on what you have and then you either handed them off to the contractor or you installed them. You didn't always get to see the very last result ... Now because we have both businesses, we actually start with a demo and we finish all the way to the end."

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Jennifer Cooper displays a jar of lotion at her home-based business, Crazy Soap Lady. Cooper makes numerous varieties of soap, as well as lotions that she sells at the Sioux City Farmers Market.

COMING CLEAN

The 'Crazy Soap Lady' of Sioux City reveals soap-making secrets

Text by *Mason Dockter* | Photographs by *Tim Hynds*

SIOUX CITY — Traditional soaps materialize from two key ingredients: A kind of oil or fat (olive oil, hempseed oil, castor oil, animal fats, whatever it may be) and the highly caustic and toxic substance known as lye, or alkali metal hydroxide.

Other components may be added to improve the scent or other properties, but the workhorse of soap is lipid and lye.

"A lot of people don't realize this, but soap — all soap — starts off by being made with lye," said Jennifer Cooper, the "Crazy Soap Lady" who makes soaps and other personal care products in her Sioux City apartment. "The process, you have

to be pretty careful with it, because if you get any of it on your skin or anything like that, it can burn you. So, it involves wearing gloves, wearing eye-safety goggles, a mask."

In the distant past, when soap-making was done at home and the product itself was often rather crude, lye was obtained by combining water and wood ash, creating potash lye, while cooking grease and tallow made up the oil/fat component.

The process today isn't quite so labor-intensive and filthy, but the components are fundamentally the same.

And while lye is harmful to any living

tissue, soap is not. That's because the lye and the oil/fat undergo a mixing-and-transformation process called saponification; they are, in a word, soap-ified.

"Within 24 hours, generally, the lye saponifies," said Cooper, a Georgia transplant to Sioux City. "So the lye is no longer lye. It actually becomes soap."

Though the soap is safe to use after only a day, Cooper goes the extra mile and allows her cold-process soap to "cure" for six weeks. "So basically, after I make my soaps, I have to let them just sit there on a shelf, so that way they'll harden up more. The longer they sit, the



Countless fragrances result in endless possibilities for the Crazy Soap Lady.



Soap stacks up at Jennifer Cooper's home before the selling season begins.

more moisturizing they are for your skin," she said.

Cooper (whose husband is Journal Circulation Director Tommy Cooper) has made soap since 2017, initially as Christmas gifts. It was a hit. "They really liked it, and I realized that I really enjoyed doing it," she said.

She got the "Crazy Soap Lady" sobriquet from her youngest daughter, who exclaimed, upon seeing her mother with all of her soap-making supplies, "Oh, my

gosh — crazy soap lady!"

The name stuck.

"People usually just kind of giggle at my name," she said.

Her product line expanded from melt-and-pour glycerin soap to cold-process soap and hot-process soap, lotions, lip balms, body oil, foaming sugar scrubs and soy candles. (The latter she makes "generally in the fall and winter, not so much necessarily in the summer when it gets real hot.")

Cold-process and hot-process soaps are differentiated by the time it takes for the soap to fully saponify and cure; cold-process soaps aren't fully ready until they've had their weeks of rest, while the hot-process soaps don't require such a long curing process, though soap-makers can opt for a longer curing. As the name implies, there is more heat in the hot-process soap production process than in cold-process.

Most of Cooper's soaps are scented with essential oils and skin-safe fragrances, though she is able to make unscented soaps for those who prefer it.

Cooper sells her Crazy Soap Lady products at the Sioux City Farmers Market, which opens for the season May 4; this will be her third year at the Farmers Market.

Though she said she usually makes soap year-round, the Crazy Soap Lady took a break after the Farmers Market closed last fall.

She spent this spring in soap-production mode, to get her inventory rebuilt and ready for market, where she's a regular.

"I like being out at the market, I do really well out there," Cooper said. "And I'm generally there every Saturday."

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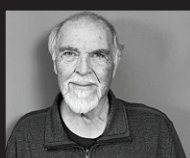
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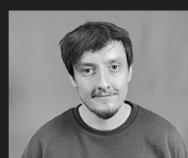
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Marty Reinert, manager at Outdoor Environments, Inc., talks about the different appliances available for outdoor cooking, two of which, this Evo grill, left, and Yoder Smoker, right, are on display at the company showroom in South Sioux City, Nebraska.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR SPACE

Outdoor living extends value of a home, variety of spaces

Text by Dolly A. Butz | Photographs by Jesse Brothers

SOUTH SIOUX CITY — Firepits, grilling islands, kitchens, bars, outdoor TVs, smokers, outdoor structures with retractable screens, pergolas with color-changing lighting and artificial turf are just some of the amenities South Sioux City-based Outdoor Environments, Inc. is using to create outdoor living spaces.

Doyle Van Dyke, who owns the landscaping company, said most people want “an extension of their house” outside. He said one of the most elaborate spaces he created included a trampoline built into the ground and a water feature. Outdoor Environments, Inc. works with other contractors, including pool contractors, to make your dream outdoor living space a reality.

“We’re a new dealer for Phantom Screens now,” Van Dyke said. “Basically, you drop the screen down, you turn the heaters on and that allows you to extend



The Outdoor Environments, Inc. showroom features an Evo grill, a Yoder Smoker and a fridge built into the stone outdoor kitchen.



Doyle Van Dyke, owner of Outdoor Environments, Inc., shows a 3D design of an outdoor living space.



Marty Reinert, manager at Outdoor Environments, Inc., shows a catalog of homes his team has worked on.



your season, possibly even a couple months or more.”

With a heater and retractable Phantom Screens, which move up and down with the push of a button on a remote or the tap of your smartphone, Van Dyke said you could easily spend 10 months of the year in your outdoor living space.

So, do you need a lot of property to create an outdoor living space? Van Dyke said you don’t.

“We’ve done outdoor kitchens in a really small space before. It’s really on how you design it to make it work for the customer,” he said.

Customers can come to Outdoor Environments, Inc., 725 W. 21st St., and check out an outdoor living space for themselves. Van Dyke can show them a 3D rendering of his designs on his laptop or a TV in the office.

“The nice thing about having a showroom is we can invite customers here and actually show them what we do on an everyday basis,” Van Dyke said. “I can do a design consultation right in the office and, then, come out here and they can see what their options are before we even do it.”

Van Dyke’s new showroom features a stack stone outdoor kitchen with slab porcelain countertops and accent lighting.

“The nice thing about that is almost anything that you have on your house or any look you want, you can get a stack stone that works with that,” said Marty Reinert, Outdoor Environments, Inc.’s manager.

Other highlights of the space include an Evo grill, built-in refrigerator, fireplace, retractable screens made by Phantom Screens, and a Yoder Smoker, which Reinert described as a “beast,” given its solidness.

“It connects to your Wi-Fi, so you can do everything but turn it on from your phone,” Reinert said of the smoker. “You can adjust your temperatures. It’s got dual thermometers, so you can check what your meat is at.”

The outdoor kitchen is designed with convenience in mind. It has ample storage space and popup plugs in the countertop.

“On the top, you’ve got a paper towel holder and, then, a couple drawers below, and here’s the trash can,” Reinert said, removing a cutting board from the countertop. “You’ve got a cutting board over

The Outdoor Environments, Inc. showroom features an Evo grill, a Yoder Smoker and a fridge built into the stone outdoor kitchen.



Doyle Van Dyke, owner of Outdoor Environments, Inc., describes his plans to complete this outdoor fireplace with a stone slab and crushed glass beneath the flames in the showroom at the company headquarters.



Doyle Van Dyke, owner of Outdoor Environments, Inc., shows a remote that controls retractable Phantom Screens.

the hole and drop it into the trash can.”

The Phantom Screens in the showroom, Reinert said, are basically insect screens, but he said you could select a model from the company that is geared more toward privacy, lets even less light through and retains heat even better.

“It really depends on what you want. Each screen can be controlled individu-

ally, or they can all be controlled together by the remote,” he said.

While customers low-maintenance landscaping, Van Dyke said there’s really no such thing. However, he tries to design outdoor living spaces that require the least amount of maintenance as possible.

“No matter what you put in, it requires maintenance,” said Van Dyke, who re-

called a customer who bought real palm trees and was told by the seller that the trees would live in Siouxland. Metal palm trees were installed in the outdoor living space, instead.

Reinert added, “Whatever they want, we can figure it out. I usually tell people, their pocketbook and our imagination is the only limitation.”



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The ushers at the Sioux City Orpheum Theatre make sure guests find their seats so the show can start on time.

JUST THE TICKET

Meet the ushers who help Sioux City's Orpheum Theatre move

Text by *Jared McNett* | Photographs by *Jess Brothers*

1 Margie Fitch can recall once working the job until 1 a.m. It got to be late enough that her husband eventually called just to ask where she was.

Early on in her role, Lisa Davis had to digitally process a seemingly endless line of aspiring "Price is Right Live!" contestants while never having used a computer before.

For one seven-day period, Robert Boyd spent every single night at the Orpheum.

"They say it's haunted and I was watching for ghosts," he joked.

Some of that might sound like quite a bit for a gig but it's all part of the production for the ushers and other staffers

who help make shindigs at the Orpheum Theatre happen.

Before the second night of a staging of "The Book of Mormon," they arrive earlier than needed for events to make sure to get prime parking spots. The room the 25 or so ushers and other volunteers meet in at the Orpheum is several floors below the street. The walls are decorated with event posters going back years and years. Their meeting table has a box of donuts and a Ziploc bag of cookies. Nearby there's a TV on a portable metal stand playing one of those reality courtroom shows.

Tim McCormick quarterbacks the

whole affair. Asked what the team would be doing if he wasn't there, he quickly fires off a jocular response.

"They'd be talking a lot."

McCormick helps to outline the jobs for the night. Some ushers will take tickets. Others will work the main floor to direct attendees to their seats.

Vicki Sandvick, a 21-year veteran who has a map of the place memorized, said the only real difficulty with seating comes when people go rogue and seat themselves. Her first event was a hockey game at the Tyson Events Center, where the ushers work when needed. She's somewhat of an introvert but said the ushering

job has helped mitigate that.

"I was painfully shy," she admitted. Now? "I enjoy meeting new people."

After the conversing subsides and the time for doors to open draws near, Sandvick and another of the senior-most ushers don black capes with red trim (which are custom made). What's also required is a white dress shirt with a black vest over top.

Prior to heading back upstairs, some of the ushers check themselves in mirrors to make sure everything is in its right place. Sandvick said the outfit makes her look like she's "out of Harry Potter." The idea is to harken back to what the original ushers wore when the Orpheum first opened in 1927 as a vaudeville and movie palace.



Ushers and security guards like Margie Fitch, left, Vicki Sandvick, right, and Robert Boyd, center, gather in the break room beneath the Orpheum Theatre.



Ushers and security guards like Helen Scott, left, and Lisa Davis, right, gather in the break room beneath the Orpheum Theatre before a show.



Ushers and security guards like Vicki Sandvick gather in the break room.

Another marker of the era is the elevator, which is still original and still operated by an actual person. Helen Scott, who's logged 40 years (five as an elevator operator), said the job represents something of a full-circle journey for her.

"I'd go to Younkers and the girls were running the elevators and I said: This is the perfect job for me. ... When the kids come on (now), they're just in awe because they've never seen someone running the elevator."

Scott runs the elevator while seated on a stool. She keeps candy with her to offer other ushers whom she helps get up and down the various floors once they've punched in on an electronic system.

During night two of "The Book of



Ushers and security guards make a plan of action including details like who will be stationed at which doors during a meeting.



Ushers clock in beneath the Orpheum Theatre before a show.



Ushers and security guards make a plan of action including details like who will be stationed at which doors during a meeting.

Mormon,” five-year pro Nettie Tayborn catches a ride with Scott at one point. She shared that she most enjoys the variety of shows that come through and the diversity of people those shows bring with them.

“There’s always something to learn. You never stop learning,” Tayborn said.

Something Tayborn herself learned is how older artists who perform at the Orpheum can be a little less high-strung. She said some of the grizzled ones are delighted to still be playing, at a venue with some history no less. First timers to the Orpheum are often in awe of the beauty, according to Sandvick.

Boyd, who’s working security, said he might be most at ease when things are at their most chaotic.

“I enjoy that a lot. It keeps you busy,” he said. “Adrenaline,” is how Davis framed it.

Though it may sound trite, Davis said what she’s come to most appreciate (along with the doses of adrenaline) are the repeat customers.

“I enjoy talking to them,” she said. “It’s entertainment.”

Fitch offered a similar perspective.

“We have fun when we work and you meet a lot of nice people who come to the shows.”



Helen Scott operates the elevator at the Sioux City Orpheum Theatre.



Lisa Davis, left, Tyler Tweet, Brian Crandall, and Robert Boyd, right, work security at the Orpheum Theatre before a show.



JESSE BROTHERS SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Don King, left, plays Bill Austin and Amanda Lemke plays Rosie in "Mamma Mia," a Night show stage musical that was part of Orange City, Iowa's 2022 Tulip Festival. Lemke is the director of "Footloose," which is this year's Night Show musical.

ALL SINGING, ALL DANCING, ALL BLOOMING!

*For nearly 75 years, the Night Show proves the
Tulip Fest is more than just flowers and wooden shoes*

Text by Earl Horlyk

Jack, get back, come on before we crack! Because everybody is ready to cut footloose during Orange City's 83rd Tulip Festival.

The stage musical version of the iconic 1984 movie "Footloose" will be this year's Night Show production, taking place May 13-18, at the Orange City Town Hall.

Handling directing duties for the show

will be Drew Lemke, who is the band teacher for the MOC-Floyd Valley Middle School, and his wife Amanda Lemke, who is the middle school's choir director.

"Footloose" is the Lemkes' second time as Night Show directors or, maybe, it counts as the couple's third attempt.

"We were well underway with 2020's production of 'Cinderella' when COVID

closed us down," Drew Lemke explained. "The Night Show was canceled because of the pandemic, but Amanda and I gave 'Cinderella' another go in 2021."

The Lemkes are actually Night Show veterans.

"This will be Amanda's 11th Night Show and my ninth one," Lemke noted. "I've been an actor, a band member and,



TIM HYNDS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Gaston, played by Don King, asks Belle, played by Amanda Lemke, to marry him during a dress rehearsal of "Disney's Beauty and the Beast" at the Unity Christian Knight Center in Orange City, Iowa. The annual musical is always a highlight on Orange City's Tulip Festival.



TIM HYNDS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Belle, played by Amanda Lemke, and Maurice, played by Tom Hydeen, sing during a dress rehearsal of "Disney's Beauty and the Beast," which was 2019's Tulip Festival's Night Show musical. For the past 74 years, Tulip Festival has featured a stage musical to coincide with the Tulip Festival. Amanda Lemke has been involved in 11 prior shows, including codirecting this year's show "Footloose."



TIM HYNDS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Gaston, played by Don King, right, and Noah Minnick as LeFou try to impress Belle, played by Amanda Lemke, during a dress rehearsal of "Disney's Beauty and the Beast" at the Unity Christian Knight Center in Orange City, Iowa. "Beauty and the Beast" was the 2019 Orange City Tulip Festival's Night Show.

now, a co-director. It is actually something I look forward to all year-round."

The Tulip Festival is big business for Orange City. With the bulk of activities taking place between May 15-18, downtown streets will be teeming with tulips, wooden shoes and as many as 100,000 people in the Sioux County seat that normally has a population of less than 6,000.

"The Tulip Festival draws visitors from

around the state, around the country, and around the world," said Orange City Chamber of Commerce executive director Mike Hofman.

The event highlights the community's Dutch heritage and one of the festival's most-honored tradition is its Night Show, which started nearly 75 years ago.

Since 1950, amateur actors, musicians and backstage personnel have volunteered their time to put on a show.

"I remember how much fun it was to see the Night Show and I couldn't wait to be a part of the action," Todd Vande Griend, a vet of more than 20 Night Shows, explained.

According to Vande Griend, a large part of the appeal came from knowledge that it was a community effort.

"It's a kick seeing your friend or your neighbor up on stage," he said, "You're seeing an entirely different side of them."

Over the years, Night Shows have included live productions of everything from "West Side Story" to "Mamma Mia" to "Shrek."

"My first Night Show was being a band member in a production of 'My Fair Lady,'" Lemke said. "My first acting part came in the Night Show version of 'Fiddler on the Roof.'"

He is especially excited about being part of "Footloose" which, as a movie, was a watershed moment for anyone who grew up in the '80s.

Unfortunately, neither Lemke nor his wife, both twentysomethings, were born

in the 1980s.

"Well, some of the fashion was cool and the music was very good," Lemke admitted.

Indeed, "Footloose" — which revolves around a teenager from Chicago who moves to a small town where he attempts to overturn a ban on dancing — features a musical score that includes songs like "Almost Paradise," "Let's Hear It For the Boy" and "Holding Out for a Hero."

While Lemke has seen the movie — featuring a fast-on-his-feet Kevin Bacon in the lead role of Ren McCormack — he was actually more familiar with the stage version that featured music and lyrics by Tom Snow and Dean Pitchford.

"I think 'Footloose' is one of those musicals that high schools and colleges like to perform," he said. "It seems to appeal to everyone, regardless of age."

This was certainly the case with the Tulip Festival's decision to stage "Footloose" as its Night Show offering.

"The preshow ticket sales have been great, which is a positive sign," Lemke said.

So has the enthusiasm level of "Footloose's" more-than-40-member company of performers.

"We've been hard at work with rehearsals since mid-January," Lemke said. "We may be rehearsing up to three-or-four days-a-week as we get closer to showtime."

Don't be surprised when people wear multiple hats. While Amanda Lemke



TIM GALLAGHER, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

John Hubers played Lord Farquaad in the Orange City Tulip Festival's Night Show production of "Shrek the Musical," which was staged in the Knight Center on the campus of Unity Christian High School in Orange City, Iowa, in May 2017.

FEELING 'FOOTLOOSE'?

WHAT: Live musical version of "Footloose," to be performed as the Night Show for Orange City's 83rd Tulip Festival

WHEN: 6:30 p.m., May 13—14; 8 p.m., May 15—18

WHERE: Orange City Hall, 125 Central Ave. S., Orange City, Iowa

is the show's co-director, she is also a seamstress, who assists when it comes to costuming.

"Amanda is really having fun with the 1980s fashions, while her dad — who is a contractor — knows how to build sets," Lemke said.

Which is essential since nearly 80 people — from backstage to onstage — will be involved with "Footloose."

As dress rehearsals are slated to begin in a few weeks, Lemke said the yearly Night Show musical has become an integral part of the Tulip Festival.

"For the community, it allows us to put on a show," he said. "For the audience, it give them a chance to experience live theater."

Especially for people who are feeling a bit footloose.

"It is such a great show," Lemke said. "I'm sure people are going to love it."



PROVIDED

Andrew Lloyd Webber's award-winning musical "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" was 2022's Orange City's Tulip Festival Night Show. It featured Drew and Amanda Lemke in acting roles. The husband-and-wife duo are both directing "Footloose," which is this year's Night Show musical.



TIM GALLAGHER, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

A group of homeless fairy tale characters wraps up a song during an early scene in the Orange City Tulip Festival's 2017 Night Show, "Shrek the Musical," at the Unity Christian Knight Center on the campus of Unity Christian High School in Orange City, Iowa, on Monday.



The head table is shown set for a wedding.

RUSTIC ELEGANCE

Country Celebrations offers a destination events center within city limits

Text by Earl Horlyk | Photographs by Tim Hynds

If you want to book your wedding, party or special occasion on a Friday or Saturday, you better call Country Celebrations Event Center's Kathy Ellison ASAP because 2025 is nearly all booked up.

Wait, 2025? Don't we mean 2024?

"No, outside a couple of random dates, every weekend in 2025 already has something in the books," Ellison, who runs Country Celebrations with her husband Todd, explained. "We work way ahead and so do our clients."

Since it opened in 2016, Country Celebrations — located inside a 13,500-square-foot rustic building with modern amenities — has become the go-to destination for weddings, graduations and business meetings.

The 5606 Hamilton Blvd. event center sits on 130 acres of wooded land that has been in Todd's family for more than 150 years. Indeed, Todd's great-great grandfather George D. Perkins, the founder of the Sioux City Journal, reportedly purchased the land from a railroad company before 1870.

Now, the land is home to the Ellisons as well as other members of the family, including daughter Erica Antrim, who helps to run Country Celebrations with her parents.

In addition to always being a working farm, the land was also used for a driving



Brittney Riedesel, Erica Antrim and Kathy Ellison are shown in the main event space at Country Celebrations Event Center.

range and minigolf business the Ellisons ran for more than two decades.

"The driving range was fun but it meant that we spent 20 years of summer without taking a day off," Ellison said. "We were all ready for a change."

That's when the family developed the concept for Country Celebrations.

Todd Ellison, who is also a contractor,

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Country Celebrations Event Center

WHERE: 5606 Hamilton Blvd., Sioux City

PHONE: 712-253-8952



A chapel sign leads the way.



An indoor chapel has been added to Country Celebrations Event Center.

built much of the facility, which can accommodate events for up to 500 people.

While the decor is, in fact, rustic, it is also elegant. Though it has a country aesthetic, the setting is neutral enough for any type of event.

Which is why Erica Antrim said Country Celebrations was an instant hit with prospective brides.

"We have a destination wedding location but we're in the city," she explained. "When you're here, you're out in nature."

This is certainly the case with Country Celebrations' new indoor wedding chapel that has large windows, looking out into a beautiful garden.

"We added on the chapel a few years ago and it has been a big success," Ellison said. "I think we have a 50/50 split, with some clients wanting their weddings inside the chapel while others prefer it in our outdoor space."

Antrim acknowledged that weddings and, even, pre-nuptial parties are becoming more elaborate.



The outdoor event space has played host to everything from weddings to politicians.



Erica Antrim and Brittney Riedesel, are shown in the bar at Country Celebrations.

"Weddings are now big parties where you want everyone to have a good time," she said.

To assist with the party mood, Country Celebrations has a large banquet hall, a large catering kitchen, a roomy serving area and a well-stocked bar.

In addition, there are separate bride and groom dressing rooms as well as a play area for kids.

"We always knew the facility would lend itself to weddings and parties," Ellison noted. "I was personally surprised that Country Celebrations has also seen its fair share of celebration of life ceremonies."

She said that is due to the event center's tranquil setting as well as the warmth of the family.

"Country Celebrations is truly a family owned and operated business," Ellison said. "We treat every client and guest as if they're a member of our family."

"It is important to us that everyone that enters our doors feels welcome and can entrust us to host their event with the same level of care and attention as we would for our own," she added.



Country Celebrations Event Center, 5606 Hamilton Blvd., is nearly booked through 2025 with weddings.

HOMES a growth area



ONE YARD AT A TIME

Iowa Landscaping looks to upgrade the area's curb appeal

Text by Caitlin Yamada

SIOUX CITY — What started as a small lawn mowing company has grown into a full-scale landscaping company.

Sam Peterson, 21, started Iowa Landscaping Company with a truck and a mower, going door to door, offering his services. Now he leads a high-end landscaping and property maintenance company.

"We're there to do good work at a fair price and we're looking to make the community look better," Peterson said.

When Peterson was a senior in high school, he was unsure what he wanted to do for a career. After graduating a semester early, he began his landscaping work. A few mowing jobs grew into small landscaping work such as installing rock and laying mulch, and at each step, he invested the money back into his business.

"We kind of just progressed a little bit more into the high-end landscaping stuff," he said. "We started to do more retaining walls, patios, pools, outdoor living, kitchens, stuff like that."



TIM HYNDY, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Sam Peterson, owner of Iowa Landscaping Company, is shown at the Sioux City business.

“Anything anybody can dream of, we can pretty much do.”

Sam Peterson,
owner of Iowa Landscaping Company

Now, Iowa Landscaping Company is starting its fourth year of operations, offering commercial and residential mowing, commercial snow removal, hardscaping, and 3-D design, as well as installation of concrete curbing, retaining walls, pavers, rock and mulch, plants and trees and more.

Peterson described the business as offering both commercial property care maintenance and landscaping. On the commercial side, Peterson said he has clients such as Fimco Industries and Bickford of Sioux City. The team takes care of property management such as mowing, landscaping, parking lot sweeping, sprinkler maintenance and more.

On the landscaping side, Peterson said, “Anything anybody can dream of, we can pretty much do.”

Peterson said he learned how to do the larger projects by diving into them, learning from other landscapers in the area and asking questions.



COURTESY PHOTO, IOWA LANDSCAPING COMPANY
Yard work done by Iowa Landscaping Company.

Last year, the company completed a large project in Whispering Creek near the 17th hole of the Whispering Creek Golf Course. The project involved a pool, patio with furniture, retaining walls, planting, concrete curbing and more.

“That was one of our biggest [projects] we’ve done to date,” he said.

Another project Peterson said he was proud of included a pool, hot tub, outdoor living area, deck, retaining walls and 3,700 square feet of paving.

For these larger projects, Peterson said they start by 3-D designing and rendering the project, that way the customer can see what they will get and make adjustments before the installation starts.

Iowa Landscaping Company won the First Time Exhibitor award at the most recent Siouxland Home Show. Peterson said the award brought more attention to their business.

At first, Peterson got business through word of mouth and knocking on doors.



COURTESY PHOTOS, IOWA LANDSCAPING COMPANY

LEFT: Iowa Landscaping Company was started by Sam Peterson four years ago. It offers landscaping services to residential and commercial clients throughout Siouxland.
Above: Iowa Landscaping Company can do a multitude of duties, designed to keep yards looking great.

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COURTESY PHOTOS, IOWA LANDSCAPING COMPANY

Iowa Landscaping Company offers hardscaping such as pools, patios, pavers, walking paths and retaining walls.

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Sam Peterson says his company offers everything from lawn mowing to landscaping to snow removal.

Now, he does advertising through his website, door hangers and yard signs. In the future, he hopes to brand his vehicles for more visibility.

This summer, Peterson will have his four full-time team members, as well as three high school and college helpers to help with mowing and property maintenance.

The future of Iowa Landscaping Company is growth, Peterson said. He hopes to continue to expand and have a full crew of employees.

"Pretty much just keep going and see what we can do," he said. "Doing some good work out in the community and making the community look nice."

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YOU, TOO, CAN BE AN INFLUENCER

Text by *Bruce R. Miller* | Photograph by *Mart Production*

I once asked a teenager what he wanted to be.

"An influencer," he replied.

An influencer? That's not a job, I scoffed.

"Go online," he said. "They're everywhere and they make big bucks."

Darn if he wasn't right. Some of the most boring, infantile, whiny people have channels where they basically go on vacation, wear gifted clothes and act like they're entitled. In exchange, their YouTube channels kick back money for the number of views they get.

One, I was told, cleared \$6 million last year and all he did was show himself working out and wearing expensive clothes. Sure, he was shirtless a lot but there was no skill to this. He wasn't even good at speaking on camera. He fumbled words (don't they do retakes?), begged for followers and talked about what a tough day he had coming up: He was going to audition for a movie role.

So, in essence, these people make big money sitting around their homes taping themselves doing next to nothing.

How is this a career?

Sure, it beats digging ditches but how do you tell a teenager "influencer" is not a career path? I'd like to be "Powerball winner," but it's not always possible.

I asked my young friend what comes after the big money starts rolling in.

"Drama," he said. "You've got to keep them watching. So, you either get mad at someone or start crying. If you've got a girlfriend, you break up with her and start talking about how lonely or lost you are."

And then? "Bigger money rolls in. Followers feel sorry for you

and think you'll cheer up if they Venmo cash or send you gift cards. A trip is usually in order."

Those trips, I learned, could be to major European cities, all expenses paid, in the finest hotels. Often, a designer will send clothing if he knows where the influencer is staying. The goal is to get the pseudo-celebrity to wear the clothes so his followers want to buy them. Never mind the price tag.

And then?

"If the numbers start dropping, you need to start an OnlyFans page."

Naively, I asked, what's that? "That's where you take your clothes off on camera and do things."

I didn't want to know.

"That's big money, though. You could double what you earn from a YouTube channel and you don't have to share it." YouTube, you see, takes a big cut of their "income."

During this economics lesson, I realized talent and skill have nothing to do with influencers' careers.

Oh sure, the page might start as a "how-to" venture but it quickly morphs into a "lifestyles" channel. Before you know it, followers are paying for the influencer's fun – the kind of fun they can't afford for themselves.

Eventually, the influencer moves onto another field (venture capitalist, perhaps) or quits the game. If enough money has been saved, he can retire before he's 30.

So what if you're twice that age? Could someone, say, 40 or 50 be an influencer?

"Not going to happen," my teen friend explained. "No one wants to watch an old guy sit around his house."

Point taken.

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