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Christ Furniture Store to Celebrate 75 Years

Big box stores, online shopping and the mobility of shoppers has changed the landscape of small-town businesses. Add in the COVID pandemic shut-down and many of those businesses have had difficulty remaining viable. Christ Furniture in Eagle Grove is an outstanding exception.

Christ Furniture was started in a store across the street from their current location, 205 West Broadway Street in 1948.

"My father and Uncle both returned from the service and decided to open a store together. They opened a hardware store

with furniture but quickly outgrew the space and moved into our current location," Jim Christ said.

In the beginning the main floor was a hardware store and each of the other floors contained furniture. Jim's father eventually took over the business completely.

During that time, Jim graduated high school and went to AIB College of Business in Des Moines. While there, he met his wife Gayle, who was attending classes as well.

Jim got his real estate license after graduating from college and sold real estate in Des Moines. After a time, the couple wanted to move out of Des Moines and back to the area. Jim's father thought it was the perfect time to have him take over the store.

"I have now owned it longer than he did," Jim said.

In the present day, all four floors contain furniture as well as an annexed building for storage. It allows the store to carry extra items without it looking crowded or cluttered.

When customers walk into the front door, they are struck by the beauty of the building and how it sets off the tasteful arrangements of living room suites.

The first floor has the original tin ceilings and an arch that separates one part of the store from another. Each has a section of sofas, love-seats and recliners along with accompanying side and coffee tables.

The cozy areas are beautifully decorated with lighting fixtures, pictures and other décor that is available for sale. The settings just invite the shopper to come in and relax a moment.

"Our goal is to sell quality furniture we can stand behind," Jim said. "I think that is the secret to our longevity."

Jim is quick to show off the innovative products that make his furniture a sound and lasting investment.

"Some fabrics are made by recycling water bottles. The fabrics are soft and durable and don't stain like other fabrics," Jim said.

He also has fabrics samples that are triple stain resistant and pet friendly.

"Fabrics have gone consumer and environmentally-friendly which is a good thing," Jim said. Up one flight to the balcony, or "second floor" is the drapery and window coverings area as well as a few pieces of well-placed furniture to relax on while choosing just the right window hangings.

The third floor of the building contains more than 80 recliners, lined up in perfect rows, each recliner different from the others.

"We do have sets of some of the recliners in stock. We just keep them in the annex just in case someone would want to take them the same day," Jim said.

While some of the recliners are similar to the ones one might have seen in grandma's living room, these chairs have come a long way.

"La-Z-Boy came up with a recliner with a taller base because they realized that the chairs are too low to the ground for some people to get out of," Jim said.

Jim demonstrated how when an individual gets out of the recliner, the front dips down making it more difficult for those with leg problems or muscle weakness to stand.

Jim also said that he has found they are selling more lift chairs as the design of the chairs becomes more mainstream.

"The manufacturers have started to hide the remotes within the chair and even made the remotes removable. They don't look like a lift chair so there isn't the stigma attached to them," Jim said.

Much of the furniture in the store has updated features. Many of the tables, sofas, chairs and headboards contain charging stations for the myriad of electronics used by today's consumers.

Which leads one back down to the basement to see the sea of beds to one side and tastefully arranged dining room sets to the other.

Even here, the product has evolved to meet the ever-changing desires of the consumer.

"Bedding is really meant for comfort. Many mattresses have cooling fabrics engineered to draw the heat away. It makes for a cooler sleeping surface," Jim said.

Not only has the surface changed, mat-



Jim and Gayle Christ look right at home in one of the many stylish living room mock-ups in their store.

tresses are different inside. Older mattresses were made with the coils wired together so when one was pressed, the surrounding coils would sink as well.

"Now many mattresses are made with individually wrapped coils so that very little of the surrounding area is disturbed when someone lays on the bed," Jim said.

Bedroom sets have changed as well. Not only do many headboards have charging ports, but adjustable beds are becoming more and more popular.

"People are watching TV, reading or do-

ing work while lying in bed and they want to be comfortable," Jim said.

He has also seen a decline in the number of mirrored dressers being sold.

"It used to be that every dresser had a mirror but now people are usually putting their TV above the dresser and they really don't want or need the mirror anymore," Jim said.

Jim is proud to point out the Spring Air mattresses he carries which are made in Iowa.

"I like to tell people that they have to



Jim Christ takes a moment to demonstrate the comfort of one of the sofas for sale at Christ Furniture in Eagle Grove.

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lay on a mattress at least 15 minutes or more to know if they are going to like it. I tell them to lay down and then I will go do something else. There is a reason we have a cover over the end of the bed so you can lay down and see what it's like," Jim said.

On the other side of the wall are the dining room sets. Many of the dining tables are smaller, made of real wood and include the option of a bench seat.

"It used to be every dining room set had a china hutch but we don't sell as many as before. Families are changing and they are looking for a different look," Jim said.

He did point out that he still carries rolling chairs with his dining room tables.

"I have had several people come in and say they can't find them anywhere. They are a bit of a luxury item but they are comfortable," Jim said.

The rolling chairs, the

cooling mattresses, the reclining sofas and the taller recliners may just be a clue to the longevity of this large furniture store in a small town. Jim and his staff, some who have worked for him for more than 25 years, are always willing to change with the times.

"We have remained in business, even during the tough times during COVID, by offering a quality product and offering superior service at all times," Jim said.

Which is why Jim and Gayle are looking forward to Christ Furniture's upcoming 75th Anniversary in June.

What's next for the couple?

"I'm just looking forward to hitting that 100-year anniversary," Jim said.

Stop in and check out the beautiful showroom, sit a spell and let Jim and his staff show you all the wonders of the new age of furniture.



A sofa sits in front of the beautiful arch that separates the two show room areas of the lower floor of the historic Christ Furniture building.



Christ Furniture carries over 80 recliners in stock to suit any ones needs.



A row of beds waits to be tried out in the basement of Christ Furniture.

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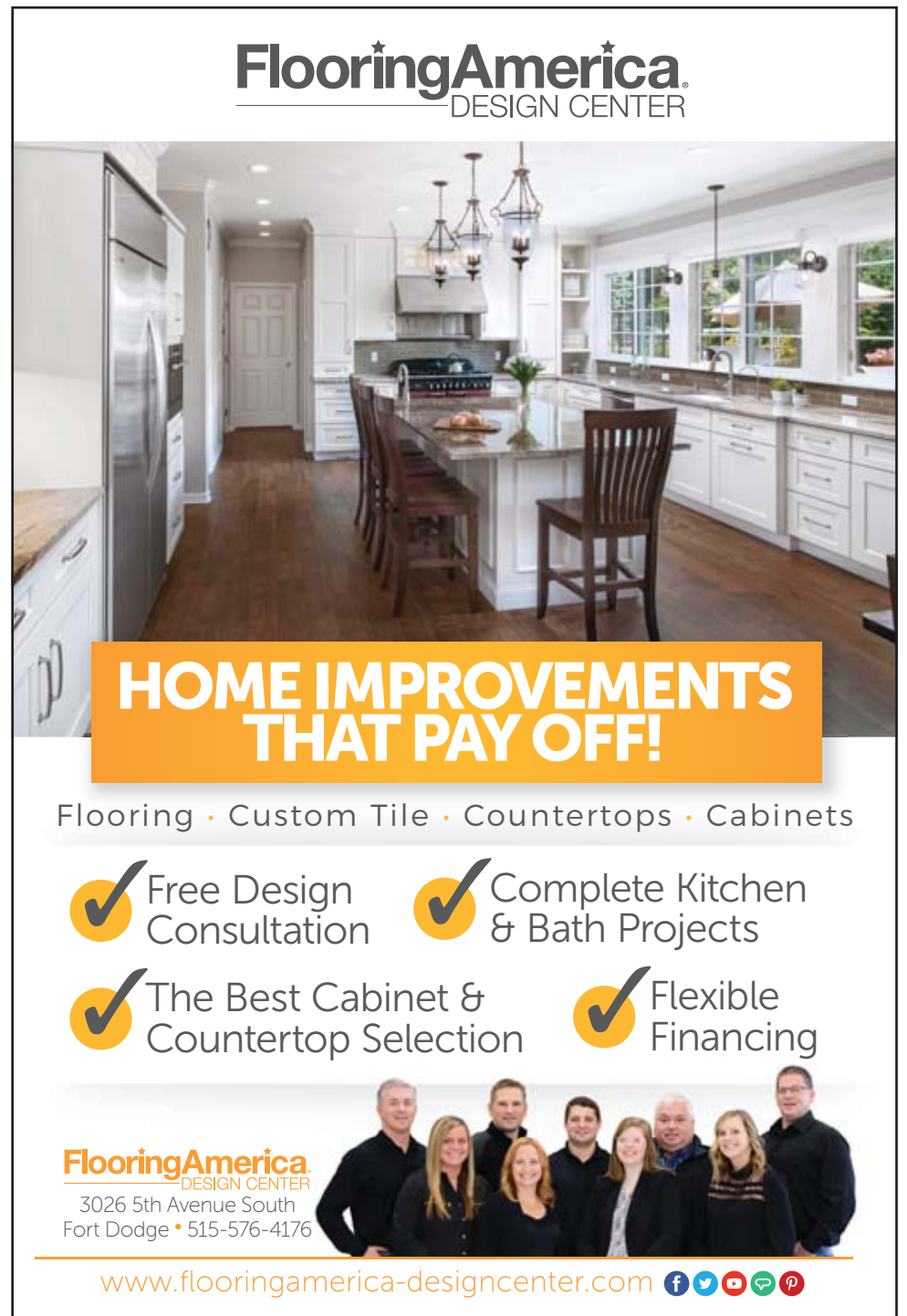

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How to make outdoor living spaces more comfortable

Private backyards are now go-to spaces for recreation and entertainment and great places to recharge the body and mind.

One ripple effect of the COVID-19 pandemic was more time spent outdoors, even if it was predominantly on one's own property. OnePoll, in conjunction with the lawn care company TruGreen, surveyed 2,000 American homeowners and found participants spent 14 hours outside every week

in 2021, which was three hours more than prior to the pandemic. In addition, respondents admitted that time spent outdoors was therapeutic.

A separate survey conducted for the International Casual Furnishings Association found that people now spend more time relaxing, gardening, exercising, dining, and entertaining outside than in years past. Though COVID-19 may no longer dominate headlines, the desire to enjoy outdoor

spaces has not waned.

While enjoying outdoor living areas, homeowners can do all they can to make these spaces comfortable and welcoming. The following are some good starting points.

Get all lit up

Outdoor spaces can be enjoyed no matter the hour when there is ample lighting. That could be why the International Casual Furnishings Association reports those who plan to renovate their outdoor spaces list outdoor lighting as a priority. Outdoor lighting not only sheds light on entertaining spaces, but also makes spaces safer and more secure.

Increase privacy

No matter how friendly homeowners are with



their neighbors, there comes a time when privacy is paramount. Fencing, whether it is wood or vinyl, or even a natural fence made from closely planted hedges, can en-

sure residents feel comfortable venturing outdoors to swim, take a cat nap or even star gaze in private.

Address the elements

Homeowners should note the direction their backyard faces and the typical daily conditions of the space. For example, a yard that faces southwest may get plenty of strong sun during the day, requiring the addition of shade trees, covered patios or arbors to cut down on the glare and heat. If the yard is often hit by winds, trees or bushes planted strategically as windbreaks can help.

Sit comfortably

High-quality comfortable seating increases the likelihood that homeowners will want to stay awhile in their outdoor spaces. A deep seating set complete with plush chairs, outdoor sofa or love seat and

chaise lounge chairs gives people more opportunity to sit and stay awhile.

Take a dip

A pool can be the perfect gathering spot on a warm day, while a spa/hot tub can bridge the gap to cooler weather. According to the Family Handyman, soaking in hot tubs can relax tired muscles after a long day, loosen up stiff joints, improve cardiovascular health, and reduce the time it takes to fall asleep.

Bite back at bugs

Homeowners may want to consider using a professional exterminator to get rid of ticks, mosquitoes and other nuisance insects from outdoor spaces.

As people spend more time enjoying their properties, they can consider the many ways to make outdoor living spaces more comfortable.



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Small renovations that can make a big impact

Home renovations provide a host of benefits. Such projects can increase resale value and improve on the safety, aesthetics and functionality of a home.

Some homeowners may employ the mantra “go big or go home” when they embark on home improvements, thinking that only the largest renovations produce noticeable change. But that’s not the case. Various smaller renovations can provide a lot of bang for homeowners’ bucks as well.

- **Countertops (and hardware):** A complete kitchen overhaul may stretch some homeowners’ budgets. However, changing an older countertop for a new material can provide the facelift a kitchen needs. And while changing the cabinets may be homeowners’ ultimate goal, swapping hardware

in dated finishes for newer handles and pulls can provide low-cost appeal.

- **Paint:** Painting a space is an inexpensive improvement that adds maximum impact. Paint can transform dark and drab rooms into bright and airy oases. Paint also can be used to create an accent wall or cozy nooks. Homeowners also can showcase their personalities with their choice of paint colors.

- **Lighting:** Homeowners should not underestimate what a change in lighting can do. When rooms or exterior spaces are illuminated, they take on entirely new looks. It’s worth it to invest in new lighting, whether it’s a dramatic hanging light over the dining room table or task lighting in dim spaces.

- **Weatherproofing:** Improving windows, doors, weatherstripping, and insulation in a home can of-



fer visual appeal and help homeowners save money. The initial investment may be significant, but those costs will pay off in energy savings. According to One Main Financial, space heating is the largest energy expense the average American homeowner has, accounting for around 45 percent of all energy costs.

- **Mudroom:** Turn an entryway into a more functional space with the addition of cabinets, benches or custom-designed storage options that perfectly fit the area. Cubbies and cabinets can corral shoes, umbrellas, hats, bags, and much more.

- **Accent updates:** Any space, whether it’s inside or outside a home, can get a fresh look with new decorative accents. Invest in new throw pillows and even slipcovers for living room sofas. Use new tile or paint the brick on a fireplace in a den, then update the mantel with decorative displays. Purchase wall art that can bring different colors into a room. Change the cushions on deck furniture and buy color-coordinated planters.

These subtle changes will not cost as much as full-scale renovations, but they can still help homeowners transform their homes.



What to know about landscape lighting

Home improvement trends come and go, and one trend that has become wildly popular in recent years is recognizable in yards every night. Landscape lighting has transformed how people see and enjoy their properties at night, making it one of the more sought-after upgrades among modern homeowners.

Curb appeal is often seen through the lens of how homes appear during daylight hours, but landscape lighting can make homes look better and more modern, and potentially safer, after the sun goes down. With such potential, landscape lighting is worth exploring for homeowners looking to upgrade their properties.

Are there different types of landscape lighting?

When considering landscape lighting, homeowners should know that there are various options to consider. According to the lighting experts at Lumens, spotlights project a concentrated and narrow beam of light that’s usually around 45 degrees. Spotlights are often chosen to highlight specific features on a property, like a component of the landscaping. Individuals who want to cast light over wider, more general areas may consider floodlights, which Lumens notes spread light up to 120 degrees.

Inground lighting is among the more sophisticated landscape lighting options. Lumens notes that inground lighting illuminates the whole of a tree or structure, often creating a dramatic look. These circle-shaped lights also are great at illuminating walkways and driveways.

Post lights are another outdoor lighting option, and these are often used to light up long walkways and pathways so it’s easier and safer to navigate dark areas at night.

Is landscape lighting a job a DIYer can handle?

Many homeowners consider a do-it-yourself approach when pondering a potential home renovation, and a landscape lighting project is likely to inspire such curiosity as well. The home experts at HGTV note that the feasibility of DIY in regard to a landscape lighting project depends on the type of lighting homeowners want to install and where they want to install it. Replacing an existing electrical fixture may be well within the skill of a seasoned DIYer, but installing a new fixture is a job best left to the professionals. Homeowners whose homes currently have no or very little landscape lighting are almost certainly better off working with a professional. Solar lighting that does not require any electrical work can be installed quickly and easily by anyone, but such options may not provide the look homeowners are aiming for.

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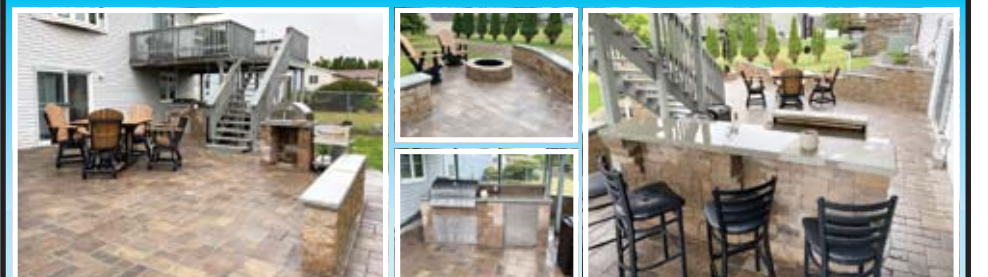
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Popular trends in home exteriors

Certain homes have an undeniable wow factor. That instant appeal tends to be noticeable the moment visitors pull up to the curb, and it might be a byproduct of homeowners' willingness to embrace the latest exterior design trends.

Trends come and go, but recognition of the current fashions can help homeowners create that highly sought-after wow factor. The following are some recent trends in home exteriors that have helped homeowners set their properties apart.

Wood

Natural wood has undeniable appeal, and it hasn't only found new-found devotion among home interior decorators. Natural wood garage doors create a sense of warmth and can set a

home apart from others with steel doors, which tend to be the most popular garage door material. In addition to the garage door, natural wood entry doors and wood decks are popular ways to impart this classical, warm look to a home's exterior.

Painted brick

Like natural wood, brick is a traditional material that's both sturdy and classical. But homeowners can add character to brick with a coat of paint, which has become a popular trend in recent years. Light tones tend to be most popular when painting bricks. The experts at Better Homes & Gardens note that this could prove a long-term commitment if homeowners so desire, as a properly painted brick

exterior could last as long as 20 years.

Hardscaping

Hardscaping isn't a new trend, but it has been trending in recent years. Hardscaping is an umbrella term that includes everything from outdoor living rooms to incorporating natural stone into a landscape. Outdoor living rooms are one hardscaping trend that has become increasingly popular of late. These spaces serve as an extension of indoor living spaces. The home improvement experts at HGTV note that recently homeowners have looked to create covered outdoor rooms that can be enjoyed more frequently than patios or decks that are not protected from the elements.



Outdoor living spaces are one popular hardscaping trend that figures to remain sought-after for years to come.

Outdoor lighting

It makes sense that individuals looking to spend more time enjoying their properties outdoors would want more lighting outside. Ambient outdoor lighting can

be utilized throughout a property. Such lighting can light up walkways and driveways and be used to light up landscaping features like trees and gardens. Home design trends

tend to be fickle. But recognition of the current trends in exterior home design can set homes apart and turn properties into awe-inspiring places to enjoy the great outdoors.

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Community Lumber Continuing a Tradition of Quality Products and Services

By APRIL KELLEY

These days it has become more common to see small town businesses, such as grocery stores, be bought by a co-operative of community members to keep them open. In 1993 when the lumberyard in West Bend was struggling, it was a novel idea.

When Harley Bruellman discovered that the lumberyard was failing financially, he put down 160 acres of his own land as collateral to keep the lumberyard open. Bruellman then convinced others to invest in the endeavor, creating Community Lumber Supply, Inc. Nearly 70 investors purchased shares keeping the community alive in Community Lumber.

Greg Blair was approached to manage the lumberyard when the community took control of it. He has successfully run Community Lumber for 30 years. Greg is transitioning towards cutting back to part-time hours beginning in April.

Kurt Zaugg, the current manager has been working at the lumberyard since January of 2010 and has seen a few changes in his time of working there.

"In December we changed from Trustworthy Hardware to Hardware Hank. We still carry the same great variety of products though," said Zaugg.

The lumberyard employs nine full time employees as well as several part-time employees. Two of these are certified plumbers, Curt Dykstra and Adam Fehr.

Many people would expect a small-town lumber supply to have a smaller selection that is offered. Nothing could be further from the truth at Community Lumber.

As the name implies, Community Lumber has a full lumberyard with all sizes and types of wood

and products that the larger chain stores carry.

"We are basically a lumberyard with a hardware store attached. The store is important but the lumberyard is the main business," Zaugg said.

The hardware store offers a wide variety of items for anything the casual to professional handyman could want.

Along with the usual hand tools, electrical and plumbing supplies, Community Lumber carries everything one would need to build a house.

In the front of the store there is a nice selection of flooring samples to choose from to meet any need.

"We do a lot of flooring. So many people are putting the high-end laminates in their homes these days. We install a lot of tile as well. People aren't carpeting as much as they used to," Zaugg said.

On the other side is the paint area. They carry only Valspar paint due to the high quality and can color match just about any color.

"We buy paint in a high enough quantity that we are able to keep the prices down to what some of the lower quality paints are at. It's a way we like to help our customers," Zaugg said.

Further towards the back is the cabinetry section. While small, there are two areas set up to give the customer and idea to start with their own designs.

"We carry KraftMaid and Bertch cabinetry. Bertch cabinets are made in Waterloo. We try to support Iowa businesses whenever we can," Zaugg said. "Another nice thing is that we can just take a trailer there and pick them up. This has reduced cabinet damage to nearly zero."

In the same area they have samples of windows,

doors, siding and shingles.

"We specialize in Marvin windows and Waude-na exterior doors. We try to supply high quality materials at a reasonable price," Zaugg said.

The lumberyard also keeps up-to-date with the latest materials. One new innovation in building materials is metal roofing.

"We carry Decra brand stone-coated metal shingles. They look like traditional shingles but wear much longer," Zaugg said.

All of the materials available can be overwhelming when one first looks at it. It can be hard to decide where to start. Community Lumber can help with that as well.

"We have several people who can help design the perfect space for anyone who is wanting to build or remodel," Zaugg said.

Tim Warden creates designs for new construction homes, shops, additions and remodels. Sherri Frieden helps people with cabinetry design and paint.

"Sherri just has a passion for colors and designs and can really help anyone narrow down what they want," Zaugg said.

The service doesn't just stop at the door either. The lumberyard has a close relationship with many contractors in the area that they can recommend for any project large or small. They also offer free delivery to the area.

"We sit in the middle of four county seats and we are the only lumberyard for in this middle area," Zaugg said.

Thankfully Harley Bruellman had the forethought all those years ago to take a chance on a local lumberyard and invest the farm. Looks like his investment and those of 70 like-minded individuals has paid off for the entire area.



Kurt Zaugg, Manager of Community Lumber in West Bend, displays one of the interior doors offered at the store.



Community Lumber makes smart use of the space inside the store, such as this wall of siding options, in order to offer the many products they carry.



Community Lumber carries Bertch and KraftMaid Cabinetry. Bertch cabinets are made in Iowa.



Community Lumber has been a community owned lumberyard since 1993 when Harley Bruellman made the daring move to put down 160 acres of his land as collateral to ensure the doors stayed open.



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