

H u m b o l d t Reminder

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

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Sue's Draperies, Etc., has been in business 41 years

By PHIL MONSON

For 41 years, Sue's Draperies, Etc., in Fort Dodge, has stood the test of time with quality products and service.

It's been Sue Baedke's approach for many years and don't look for it to change.

"When I started in the window treatment business, most styles were draperies, valances, sheers and some metal mini blinds. Now things have changed some with alternative products like shades and blinds with perhaps some side panels to soften the look," Baedke said.

"We still can do any type or style of window treatments, including vintage and retro," said Baedke, a lifelong Fort Dodge area resident.

"Clients seem to want a little more scaled down and sleek look, but very functional with motorization with remote control or cordless lifting systems instead of cords. With today's products you can set up an app on your phone to control your shades from almost anywhere there is internet access," Baedke said.

"Baedke's love for design and home decorating goes back to her childhood in the 4-H youth program for many years. Originally, I was employed by White's Furniture in furniture and flooring sales and also doing business bookwork," Baedke said.

"When asked to work for Sherwin Williams Decorating Center in Fort Dodge, they did custom window treatments that I had no background in at the time. The company had training staff in different locations that they would send me to learn the logistics of measuring and figuring out yardage for customer jobs. My background and love of decorating along with the specific training from Sherwin Williams led me to then manage Drapery World, which was part of the Furniture and Carpet World businesses in downtown Fort Dodge," Baedke said.

"When they were closing in the early 1980s, I had to either sink or swim, so I decided to go on my own and specialize in the custom-

made window treatments. Window treatments is a general term describing any type of fabric treatments, shade and blinds used to give privacy, insulation and beauty to both homes and businesses," Baedke said.

"Since we do more than just draperies, I've added 'Etc.' to the end of my business name. I offer free shop-at-home service where I come to your home or office, bring samples and make suggestions. We can do everything from the beginning to the end of the project, whether it's one window, remodeling your house or building a new home. I have always worked with many of the largest worldwide companies such as Hunter Douglas and Lafayette Interior Fashions," Baedke said.

"They offer quality products and great warranty support and online websites.



Sue Baedke of Sue's Draperies, Etc., in Fort Dodge, can custom design window treatments for new homes or any remodeling project.



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I have a website (www.suesdraperiesetc.com) that offers many photos and ideas that can help the customer become familiar with what's available," Baedke said.

"I've had great response to my website and it has been helpful for clients moving to our area and seeking help with their home decorating," Baedke said.

"My normal range of business is about a 50-mile radius of Fort Dodge but I have also done several jobs for my clients that I've worked with and that have moved to other states. By offering online chats and facetime visits, we can work together and then we can ship them the finished products. We have shipped to at least four states and Canada," Baedke said.

"Some customers have moved to our area and used my website first to familiarize themselves with my work and background. One of the favorite parts of my business is that I get to know the people as I work with them and understand their likes and dislikes," Baedke said.

"Some people prefer to come into my store and see displays of the window treatments and then I will bring samples to their

home office and offer a no-obligation quote. I say I work part-time because I try to take Fridays off to have a three-day weekend. But by the time Monday comes, I'm very ready to get back to my work," Baedke said.

"If you love what you do, it's not a hard job and I love interacting with my clients," Baedke said.

Sue's Draperies Etc., located at 1718 Central Avenue, Fort Dodge, IA, is open weekdays, Monday through Thursday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays are by appointment.

"When I'm out measuring and showing samples I have ladies that are at my store to take messages and appointments. I'm only a phone call away at 515-955-5398.

"There have been quite a few changes in window treatments over the years and so many updates with new technology. Offering motorized options that can be controlled with hand-held remotes, wall-mounted remotes or by working with a phone app," Baedke said.

"The laws are changing about child and pet safety with cords so most of our treatments offer want control, cordless lifting or the motorization," Baedke said.

Baedke says she found her calling a long time ago and is committed to providing service and long-lasting quality and beautiful window treatments.

"It has been an honor to work with my clients and then a second generation that might need something

in their homes or condos. What I love is helping find the right options for them for their homes. We actually have thousands of fabrics from all over the world that can be made in the United States to fit any décor," Baedke said.



Sue Baedke of Sue's Draperies, Etc., in Fort Dodge, has a wide range of products for her customers.



Sue's Draperies, Etc., is located at 1718 Central Avenue in Fort Dodge, but serves customers in a 50-mile radius.



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HUMBOLDT NEWSPAPERS



How DIY can be bad for homeowners' bottom lines

Homeowners know it can be tempting to go the do-it-yourself (DIY) route when starting a home improvement project. Home repairs and renovations can be costly, and the notion of saving money on such projects compels many homeowners to try their hand at home improvements. However, the DIY approach can be costly as well, and if things go awry, homeowners may end up with empty pockets and unfinished projects.

Online tutorials and advertisements for home improvement retailers can make DIY seem like a snap. However, there are potential pitfalls to consider that could make the ostensibly less expensive DIY route far more detrimental to the bottom line than homeowners may recognize.

• **Permits:** Permits ensure work is done in accordance with local codes, which are designed to ensure the safety of residents and

their neighbors. Licensed contractors know which permits are necessary for projects they're hired to work on, and many even procure permits for their clients (homeowners are urged to read estimates and contracts to determine who will be responsible for acquiring the appropriate permits). DIYers may not know about local permits, and therefore go ahead with projects without procuring any. That can be harmful in the short- and long-term. In the short-term, a failure to procure the appropriate permits can make a home less safe and potentially lead to costly fines and necessitate a complete do-over of the project. In the long-term, homeowners who did not secure the appropriate permits may not be given a certificate of occupancy (CO) when putting their homes on the market, which can make it very difficult to sell the home.

• **Ancillary costs:** The ancillary costs of DIY are not often noted in online tutorials. However, such costs can dramatically increase the amount of money DIYers shell out in order to complete projects on their own. Ancillary costs include but are not limited to the price of tools and equipment; disposal fees for materials that will need to be discarded; and the cost of permits. These costs are often included in estimates provided by contractors, but they're easily overlooked by novice DIYers.

• **Repairs:** Even experienced contractors make mistakes, so DIYers, particularly novices, can anticipate making a few errors along the way. Minor mistakes may not prove too costly, but more significant mishaps can quickly negate any cost savings associated with DIY renovations. The cost to fix DIY mistakes varies depending on the project,



but a 2019 survey from Porch.com found that the average DIY mistake cost homeowners \$310 and added five and a half hours to the overall time spent to complete a project. It's worth noting the Porch.com

survey was conducted prior to the dramatic increase in materials costs related to inflation in recent years. So it's reasonable to assume that fixing DIY mistakes in 2024 could end up costing considerably more than a

few hundred dollars.

Before diving in to DIY, homeowners may want to consider the real costs associated with foregoing professional experience in the potentially misplaced hopes of saving a few dollars.

Signs it's time to repair or replace your deck

Spring is a season of rejuvenation that compels millions across the globe to quit hibernating and get back to enjoying the great outdoors. Spring also marks a great time to assess a home's exterior, namely those areas like a deck where people will spend a lot of time in the warmer months to come.

Assessing a deck after winter can be eye-opening. Harsh winter weather can take its toll on a deck, and the following are some telltale signs that a deck

could be in need of repair or replacement.

• **Wobbly underfoot and in hand:** Wobbly planks and railings are one sign of a deteriorating deck homeowners won't recognize as they hide from winter weather indoors. But these tend to reveal themselves rather quickly when examining a deck after winter. Wobbly planks in the middle of the deck can be inconvenient, but wobbly steps and railings can be dangerous. According to the home improvement resource

Angi, wobbly railings can be a byproduct of rot. A local decking professional can assess the extent of the rot in railings and elsewhere and determine the best course of action. If the rot is isolated to an area or two, a simple repair may be all that's necessary. Extensive rot may require a full replacement of the existing deck.

• **Faded paint:** Many homeowners paint their wood decks, and that paint will not last forever. Faded paint can turn an otherwise lovely deck into an eyesore,

and paint can fade over the winter. Thankfully, a local painter can address a faded deck and may recommend some additional strategies to safeguard the deck against fading next winter and beyond.

• **Holes in the wood:** Many a homeowner has encountered curious-looking holes in their deck. This could be a sign of insect infestation. Termites, carpenter ants and carpenter bees are among the various types of insects that can bore holes through wood. Homeowners who

notice holes throughout their deck are urged to call a deck professional and/or pest control firm to assess the holes and offer a solution. Though small issues may be addressed with repairs, a deck littered with holes caused by insects may need a full replacement.

• **Rust:** Wood decks may be made of wood, but they can still exhibit signs of rust, namely in the nails and metal connectors that hold the deck together. If screws have rusted to the point where they are no longer

holding the deck together, a full-scale replacement could be in the cards, as the deck could have substantial structural damage. Like other issues that can reveal themselves during a springtime inspection of the deck, rust necessitates a thorough examination by an experienced decking professional.

Many people do not use their decks during winter, which only underscores the significance of a full deck inspection in spring.

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Ace Hardware is the Place

By APRIL KELLEY

Every once in a while, everything comes together to create the perfect situation. For Mitch Fridolfson, Joe McCullough and Ace Hardware, that event occurred in May of 2023.

Mitch Fridolfson opened the Hardware Hank store in the spring of 2017 in conjunction with his plumbing and heating business, North Central Iowa Service (NCIS).

As many will remember, during shutdowns during COVID, many building materials became more difficult to come by. Not only were the shortages of supplies due to plant shutdowns and supply chain issues, but with more people being home, there were more do-it-yourself projects happening.

Fridolfson discovered during his research into those supply chain issues that Ace Hardware had superior buying power as

well as more backing and support. He decided to make the switch from Hardware Hank to Ace Hardware in early 2023.

At that same time, his longtime friend, Joe McCullough was working at as a field technician in Clarion and while he liked his job, he had always wanted to run a hardware store.

McCullough, his wife Heidi and their children, Jonathan, 10 and Madelyn, 6, live in Thor. The children attend school in Humboldt and Heidi owns the Just Teasin Salon in Humboldt. It just seemed natural then to work in Humboldt.

McCullough practically grew up in a hardware store. He was 13 years old when he started working in his father's hardware store in Humboldt.

McCullough's father had purchased the Coast to Coast Hardware Store in 1992 when McCullough was in third grade. Several years

later, he too changed his store to an Ace Hardware Store in 1995.

"I basically grew up in a hardware store. We moved to town when I was in third grade and Dad bought the store. I started working there when I was 13 years old," McCullough said.

McCullough worked in the hardware store until he graduated from high school and his father closed the store.

"I got my own place and moved on but it's always been in the back of my mind to get back into hardware and here we are," McCullough said.

Fridolfson needed someone he would depend on to help with the transition and knowing his friend's background, negotiated with him to run the new Ace Hardware store.

As with most things, the transition was more time consuming and had more snags than they had anticipated.

"It wasn't easy, but it



was worth it in the end," McCullough said.

"It wasn't seamless. There were times when we couldn't get product or we were moving stuff or we didn't have things on the shelves, but we kind of expected that though," Fridolfson said.

During the transition, they

did a complete remodel of the store.

"There wasn't an inch of the store we didn't touch, spin, turn, move, pack and restock and we are still doing it," McCullough said.

The store is laid out so the center is more open with shelves and displays rising

higher towards the back giving the store a more open feel.

The store is laid out in typical hardware store fashion but has quite a few special features.

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“When Sears basically shut down their stores, Ace picked up Craftsman tools. We are a full warranty center for Craftsman tools. There is nowhere else to take the stuff,” McCullough said.

Along with power tools, they also sell Generac generators.

With summer just around the corner, they also carry a large selection of items for the outdoors.

They have a full greenhouse on the grounds

as well as lawn and garden tools.

They carry Toro, Ego, Stihl, Honda and Craftsman mowers, tillers, chainsaws, hedgers and more. Anything necessary for lawn care can be found at the store.

They also have a large grilling selection. With their selection of Traeger, Recteq, Blackstone and Weber grills and accessories, there is sure to be something for any backyard enthusiast.

McCullough has also been able to carve out a section of the store in order to display the many grills available so buyers can see the actual item before purchasing.

“We will assemble and deliver any grill or lawn mower in the store in the Humboldt area,” McCullough said.

The store boasts an entire aisle of just seasonings with every imaginable combination for any flavor palette.

“We also have the largest selection in the area of seasonings and rubs for cooking and grilling,” McCullough said.

Most people don’t always need the bigger ticket items though. Many people who come in just need a few parts or pieces to continue working on their home

improvement projects.

Ace carries a full selection of plumbing and electrical supplies as well as fastening materials such as nails and screws and hand tools.

“We have a huge HVAC department. Our plumbing and electrical departments are probably the largest in the area,” McCullough said.

“Plumbing and HVAC is almost our niche. We have pretty much everything they have available, or pretty close to,” McCullough said.

One thing that many people don’t often think about is that they can rent larger or more expensive equipment that they might only use once or a handful of times.

“We have everything from carpet cleaning machines to tile cutters to bigger things like skid loaders and mini excavators. We have post hole augers and a stump grinder as well,” McCullough said.

Many of the products and

services are typical for a hardware store, but some are unexpected.

Ace hardware has a window glass and screen repair department.

“With the nicer weather, we have been really busy with that lately. I think people are finally finding out we do it too,” McCullough said.

They also have a full service repair department

SEE ACE, 10




Tools extend down the wall as far as the eye can see at Ace Hardware in Humboldt.

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Ace CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

for lawn mowers, small engine tools and equipment. Another thing that becomes extremely popular this time of year is fishing. Ace Hardware carries nightcrawlers as well as fishing licenses. “I think we are the only place besides the courthouse where you can buy a fishing license in Humboldt County,” McCullough said. Ace is also the dropshipping location for UPS. “People can bring their

packages in to be shipped through UPS so that they don’t have to drive all the way to Fort Dodge,” McCullough said. The dropship station has become more popular as people are buying things online and need a place to ship their returns from. Ace Hardware has thrown their hat into the online arena as well with their own app and online ordering system. “Our online sales have really increased. We also

have Ace Rewards that help people to save money by using the app,” McCullough said. Both Fridolfson and McCullough felt the change from Hardware Hank to Ace Hardware has been a positive one. “Everyone really seems to like the store and its layout. It’s more open and inviting,” McCullough said. McCullough feels that online sales through the Ace app will become more and more popular in the future. “We are still looking at areas to expand into. We are listening to the customers and may have some plans to expand,” Fridolfson said. They are looking into the possibility of a small sporting goods department or expanding other areas of building materials. “We really want the community’s feedback into what they want and need. We welcome comments on ways we can improve,” McCullough said. The store employs



Ace employee, Gavin Warden, mixes some paint for a customer. The store has a full-service paint section where they can mix paints to match your color scheme.

anywhere from 10-12 people on the average.

“We are always looking for full- or part-time people to work at the store. I think we have a good atmosphere and are a good place to work,” McCullough said. The store is open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. “Customer service is really our number one priority. That is our main driver,” McCullough said. McCullough invites everyone to stop in, grab a bag of popcorn from the machine and see all the changes and check out the new products available at the store. “I think you will find we have very competitive prices and a helpful staff who are always willing to go the extra mile,” McCullough said.

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Joe McCullough took over as the manager of the hardware store when it changed from Hardware Hank to Ace Hardware. McCullough’s father owned the Ace Hardware Store located on Main Street in Humboldt.



Ace Hardware carries a full line of lawn mowers. The walk behind lawn mowers and riding lawn mowers are displayed in several areas inside the store.



An entire section of the store is dedicated to just spices. The spices shown actually wrap around the shelves and continue on the other side of the shelving unit.



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Tips when hiring a contractor, get signed documents

Contractors perform important work for millions of homeowners every day. Home improvement projects are complicated undertakings, and the experience of skilled contractors can ensure jobs are completed on time and within homeowners' budgets.

Homeowners have undoubtedly heard horror stories from neighbors about projects that have gone awry. Projects can go sideways for a number of reasons, but a skilled contractor can help homeowners navigate such situations successfully. That underscores how important it can be to find the right professional for the job. The following are some tips homeowners can consider as they look to hire a contractor.

- Identify which professional you need. Some contractors are of the jack-of-all-trades variety, but many specialize in a particular line of work. It's important that homeowners identify which type of contractor they should work with prior to starting a project. This requires homeowners to define the goal of the project (i.e., new wood floor installation), which can serve as a springboard into finding the right type of contractor.
- Prioritize building safety. Safety should be the utmost priority for homeowners

and contractors alike. Prior to hiring a contractor, homeowners should identify any safety restrictions that might be enforced by local governments and take note of all the permits necessary to get a job done. Homeowners can then discuss those restrictions and permits as they interview contractors. Projects that do not adhere to code are illegal and can compromise homeowners' ability to sell their homes in the future. So it's vital to work with contractors who are familiar with local codes and aware of which permits are necessary to ensure a project can go forward.

- Insist on written estimates. Handshake agreements offer no protection to homeowners or contractors, so estimates indicating what will be done and how much the project will cost should be provided. Homeowners should insist on receiving written estimates and interpret an unwillingness to provide one as a significant red flag.
- Know your rights. Laws vary by region, but in general homeowners have a right to a written contract and contractors are obligated to provide a copy of that contract signed by both parties. That contract must be provided prior to the start of the project. The contract should provide a detailed



account of the work that will be done, as well as a timeline indicating important dates that components of the project will begin and be completed. The contract also should detail materials and who is providing them. Details regarding payments, guarantees and warranties also should be cited.

- Do not pay in cash. Some contractors may suggest that the project will cost less if they're paid

in cash. However, home improvements should never be cash transactions. Cash does not indicate proof of payment, which can be problematic if a dispute arises. Contractors help homeowners turn dream projects into reality. Homeowners can employ various strategies to ensure they find the right professional for their home improvement project.

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Tips to revitalize a garden this spring

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that pays a host of significant dividends. Many people love gardening because it allows them to spend time outdoors, and that simple pleasure is indeed a notable benefit of working in a garden. But the National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture notes that gardening provides a host of additional benefits, including helping people get sufficient levels of exercise, reduce stress and improve mood.

With so much to gain from gardening, it's no wonder people look forward to getting their hands dirty in the garden each spring. As the weather warms up, consider these tips to help bring a garden back to life.

- Discard the dead weight. Winter can take its toll on a garden, even in regions where the weather between December and early spring is not especially harsh. Discard dead plants that have lingered into spring and prune any perennials that need it. Branches that fell during winter storms also should be removed at this point if they have not previously been discarded.
- Test the soil. Soil testing kits can be purchased at local garden centers and home improvement retailers. Such tests are inexpensive and can reveal if the soil needs to be amended to help plants thrive in the months to come.
- Mulch garden beds. Mulching benefits a garden by helping soil retain moisture and preventing the growth of weeds. Various garden experts note that mulching in spring can prevent weed seeds from germinating over the course of spring and summer. That means plants won't have to fight with weeds for water when the temperature warms up. It also means gardeners won't have to spend time pulling weeds this summer.
- Inspect your irrigation system. Homeowners with in-ground irrigation systems or above-ground systems that utilize a drip or soaker function can inspect the systems before plants begin to bloom. Damaged sprinkler heads or torn lines can deprive plants of water they will need to bloom and ultimately thrive once the weather warms up.
- Tune up your tools. Gardening tools have likely been sitting around gathering dust since fall. Serious gardeners know that tools can be expensive, so it pays to protect that investment by maintaining the tools. Sharpened pruners help make plants less vulnerable to infestation and infection. Well-maintained tools like shovels and hoes also make more demanding gardening jobs a little bit easier, so don't forget to tune up your tools before the weather warms up.

It's almost gardening season, which means gardeners can start on the necessary prep work to ensure their gardens grow in strong and beautiful this spring.



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Renovations that help sell homes

The adage “there’s a lid for every pot” suggests that, even in relation to the real estate market, there’s bound to be a buyer for every home on the market. Price is a significant variable in the minds of potential buyers, but there are additional factors that can affect the impression people get of a given home.

Certain home features can tip the scales in favor of sellers. In fact, various renovations can help sell homes more readily. And these renovations need not cost a fortune. Putting a home on the market can be stressful, but these renovations may help it sell fast.

- A fresh coat of paint: Although painting is relatively inexpensive and a job that some do-it-yourselfers can tackle, it’s not a task relished by many. Painting is messy, it takes time, and requires moving furniture. In fact, prepping a room for painting often is the toughest component of any painting job. But fresh coats of paint can create a strong first impression. Choose a neutral color and get painting. Jennie Norris, chairwoman for the International Association of Home Staging Professionals, says gray is a “safe” color that has been trending in recent years.
- Minor bathroom remodel: Remove dated wall coverings, replace fixtures, consider re-glazing or replacing an old tub, and swap old shower doors for fast fixes in a bathroom. If there’s more room in the budget, replacing a tub, tile surround, floor, toilet, sink, vanity, and fixtures can cost roughly \$10,500, says HGTV. You’ll recoup an average of \$10,700 at resale, making a minor bathroom remodel a potentially worthy investment.
- Redone kitchen: The kitchen tends to be the hub of a home. This room gets the most usage and attention of any space, and it’s a great place to focus your remodeling attention. The National Association of the Remodeling Industry estimates that homeowners can recover up to 52 percent of the cost of a kitchen upgrade upon selling a home. Buyers want a functional and updated kitchen. Trending features include drawer-style microwaves and dishwashers, commercial ranges, hidden outlets and even wine refrigerators.
- Updated heating and cooling system: Better Homes and Gardens reports that homeowners may be able to recoup 85 percent of the cost of new HVAC systems when they sell their homes. Heating, cooling and ventilation components are vital to maintain. You don’t want buyers to be taken aback by an older system, and many millennial buyers are not willing to overlook old mechanical systems.
- Fresh landscaping: A home’s exterior is the first thing buyers will see. If they pull up to a home with eye-catching landscaping and outdoor areas that are attractive yet functional, they’re more likely to be intrigued. Often buyers will equate a home that features an impressive exterior with upkeep inside as well. The American Nursery Landscape Association says the average homeowner may spend \$3,500 for landscaping.

Improving a home’s chances to sell quickly and at a higher price often comes down to making smart improvements that catch the eyes of buyers.







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