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FALL 2025



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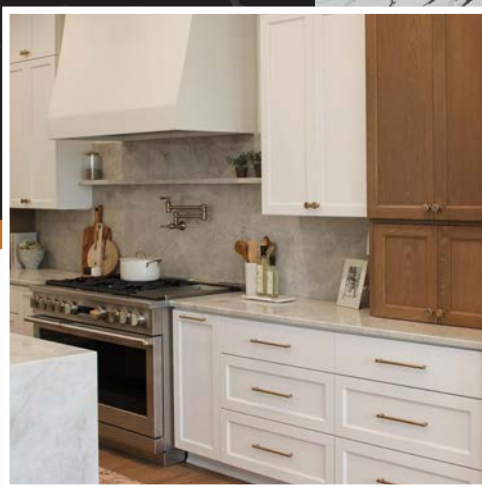
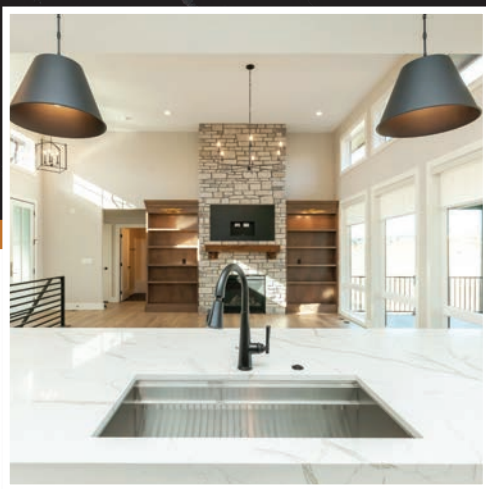
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# Not ready for the burn pile quite yet

I inherited some old Adirondack chairs a few years ago. At the time, I reasoned that with a light sanding and a new coat of paint, these could be nice chairs. When my “light sanding” peeled off heavy layers of paint, I knew I was in for more work than I had planned. I persisted, though, using a power washer to take off the large stuff and an orbital sander to smooth it out. After two coats of oil-based primer, two coats of top paint, and many hours of labor, my wife asked why I didn’t just buy new chairs. Fair question.



The answer was that this became a challenge I had to conquer. The amount of time or money I was putting into the chairs quickly became irrelevant. I simply had to win. While power-washing, sanding, priming and painting, I couldn’t help but think about what these old chairs had been through, and I smiled as I thought how similar they are to the human body.

Each layer of paint represents memories for someone. These are the experiences the prior owners had, much like the clothes we choose to wear on our bodies. Sometimes old and worn. Sometimes faded. Sometimes needing repaired. Sometimes needing replaced. But we also sometimes hang on to them, often by needle and thread or with a new accessory to make the old appear new again. Even so, each layer — each color — represents a specific stage of life.

Underneath those layers of paint, I found a few damaged boards that needed repair — broken bones, you might call them. Despite the fix, they are not quite the same. The repaired pieces don’t blend in with the others, but they do keep the old chairs usable, at least for a while.

Securing these boards were a bunch of rusty screws — the joints of the chairs. At first, they were shiny, new and sharp, made to hold the bones together. Over time, they weakened, became discolored and even broke off. So, in a surgical DIY effort, I took a few of the worst ones out, and I screwed in shiny, new, sharp ones again.

While putting in the new screws, I realized that some of the core wood was soft and rotten, no longer able to do what it was intended to do. The shiny, new, sharp screws couldn’t hold that mush together anymore. Repair was no longer an option. These vital boards — the organs of my chairs — needed replaced immediately.

I did the work to these chairs a few years ago, and I am proud to say they are still standing today. Sure, the paint is peeling in spots again, and a few more repairs are needed, but they are usable. My wife says they need to be discarded, maybe even set aflame. I am not ready to throw them in the burn pile just yet. Like most of us, with a little TLC, they have a few more good years left in them.

Thanks for reading. ■

**SHANE GOODMAN**  
President and Publisher  
Big Green Umbrella Media  
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**COVER:** Jess and Jon Severson, with their dog, Rosie, enjoy the added entertainment space their newly remodeled basement provides.  
Photo by Jackie Wilson



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## Entertainment and bar area

Unfinished basement allows for customization.

AFTER



The basement of Jess and Jon Severson includes a bar with a kegerator for their favorite craft beer. Photo by Jackie Wilson

When Jess and Jon Severson moved into their Waukee home in 2022, the new home offered an unfinished basement. The builder had only one basement option, which they declined.

“We thought we’d hold off on the basement and save for something we really wanted,” Jon recalls.

The basement served as a place for storage until the couple finally decided on what they wanted to do in the remodel. They wanted the basement to include an entertainment area with bar as well as room for storage.

The couple, who are craft beer fans, considered installing a commercial bar. What they came up with instead was a kegerator with two tappers. The back of the bar has open counterspace for bar items or mixing cocktails. They added USB ports underneath the bar for easy charging of devices. Décor includes bar tappers, which they can add as they collect them.

BEFORE





AFTER



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Hardwood floors were installed instead of carpet.

“It’s easier to clean than carpet, especially when you have a dog,” Jess says.

A dartboard, couch and large screen TV ensures entertainment for their friends. The couple watches Iowa State University sports. (They met while attending ISU.) Storage areas round out the basement.

The couple says the remodel was ideal.

“It was super easy and super quick. When you do a remodel, you think it will take too long,” Jon says. “We stayed on budget and on schedule. We’re lucky.”

Jess is happy they delayed the remodel.

“We got everything we wanted. We took time to write down the features we wanted over the past few years,” she says.

They’re happy for the new place to entertain friends.

“The process was efficient and great,” Jon says. ■



Jess and Jon Severson waited two years before remodeling their basement, taking time to list out their must-haves.

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# Remodeling with a budget in mind

Modern décor gives new look to living room and kitchen.

AFTER



With an eye for design, Cheryl Baumgarten enjoys changing the décor of her home while keeping an eye on the budget.

(Editor's note: The following is about the author, Joe Baumgarten, and his wife, Cheryl's, remodeling experiences.)

Cheryl Baumgarten would describe her design style as “modern, but on a budget.” Since the Baumgartens moved into their Urbandale home in 2021, they have followed that model to make some significant improvements.

“The kitchen was mostly as we wanted: granite countertops, white cabinets, a large island, backsplashing, etc. It was the walls and the floors that desperately needed help,” Joe says.

“The upstairs had solid wood flooring, but it was a very dark brown and had been damaged by the prior resident's dog,” Cheryl explains.

She chose a lighter tan manufactured wood that now covers every room on the main floor except for the laundry and bathrooms.

“It lightens up the living space, giving it the appearance of being much larger,” Joe adds.

The entire basement was covered with an outdated and worn carpet that was replaced by tan-colored LVP flooring.

“It has a much cleaner look and helps keep our allergies from flaring,” Joe says.

One of their favorite rooms in the house is the three-sided sunroom with a see-through fireplace. In addition to the new paint and floors, blinds and new marble tile around the fireplace were added to the room.



AFTER



When Joe and Cheryl Baumgarten moved into their home, the walls were a “contractor beige.” Cheryl chose a medium gray for most of the rooms, and the couple installed a lighter flooring to brighten the space.

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“Every single room in the house was painted the same ‘contractor beige’; it was so dull,” Cheryl says. “I chose a medium gray for most of the rooms. Fortunately, Joe was able to repaint all three bathrooms and three of the bedrooms himself. He did a great job, and that saved us a good amount of money.”

The savings were used to hire professionals to paint the kitchen, living room, master bedroom, stairwell and family room.

“All of those rooms connected and had too much height and too much trim for me to tackle,” Joe says.

Another major enhancement was replacing every light fixture. Darker-colored ceiling fans and ceiling lights were replaced by brighter, more modern versions featuring glass and silver colors. ■



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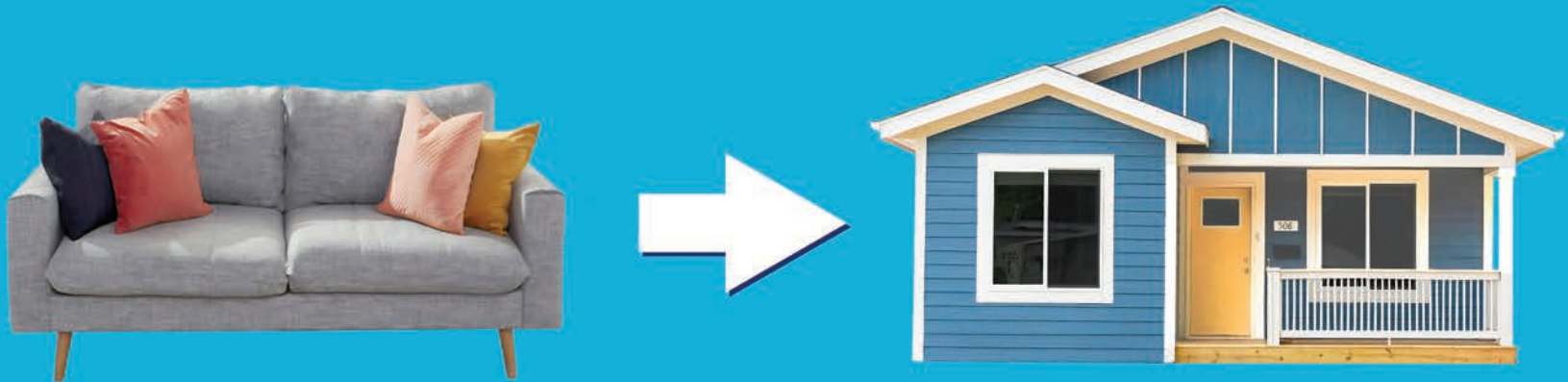
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## Crazy to chic

Pruisners start from scratch with master bathroom.

When the Pruisners purchased their Ankeny home nine years ago, they knew it would need to be completely remodeled and updated.

“The entire house was like crazy colors — yellow, greens,” Michele Pruisner says. “We have spent the last nine years doing that. Everything in the house, including the exterior, has been updated and changed, including a massive landscaping project.”

One of the highlights for the couple is the new master bathroom.

“The bathroom was all my vision,” Pruisner

says. “I absolutely love interior/exterior design and was so excited to do this project. I knew we were starting from scratch, as we demolished it down to the studs, so I had free range on the design.”

She wanted to have a wet room, which kept the shower and tub separate, and the rest just kind of fell into place. She decided on a modern farmhouse style and chose neutral grays for the space. The floors are tile, and the shower walls are marble. White bowl sinks and gray cabinets complete the look.

The Pruisners purchased everything prior to

construction starting, so the overall project went smoothly.

They most recently finished adding a covered front porch and additional backyard landscaping.

Pruisner advises folks to be prepared for the ups and downs that come with any construction project.

“Sometimes it works out exactly as planned, and sometimes you have to make quick changes to the plan to make it all work out,” she says. “But, overall, it’s so worth it in the end.” ■

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AFTER



The new master bath features gray colors and a pair of bowl sinks for a modern look.

AFTER



The Pruisners' new master bath features a wet room with showers and tub closed off from the rest of the room.

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# Patio turned into a haven

Enjoying the outdoors rain or shine



Michelle Bowden of Waukee wanted to enjoy her outdoor space, so she remodeled her concrete deck. Photo by Jackie Wilson

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Michelle Bowden moved to Waukee in 1996 and to her current home in 2006.

Her home was ideal, yet the patio was just a concrete slab. She enjoyed sitting outside for many years but wanted to sit in the open air in all types of weather, regardless of rain or intense sun.

She scoured the internet for ideas and inspiration and hired a contractor to make her vision a reality. Today, a covered patio includes a roof with a pillar at each corner. The stone pillars lend to the design of the patio. Bowden says she likes how the pillar “shelves” offer extra space to put items.

“If I have a party, people can put drinks on them,” she explains. “I can put my stereo on one of them.”



BEFORE



Michelle Bowden's space in her patio

Décor includes a high-top patio table, along with other seating arrangements. A TV mounted on the side of the home and an outdoor cooler offer easy entertaining. A ceiling fan provides a cool breeze. Now, she and friends don't have to head indoors when rain pops up.

“We still sat outside,” she says. “I couldn't have done that if I didn't have this patio.”

The patio blends with her above-ground pool for summertime enjoyment. A beach theme through the patio is evident in various décor, as she enjoys visiting Florida and Costa Rica. Memorabilia from the tropical spots often makes its way to her patio.

Rounding out the rest of her outdoor space are flowerpots, lawn decorations, metal

AFTER



Michelle Bowden enjoys entertaining friends in her back patio. Photo by Jackie Wilson



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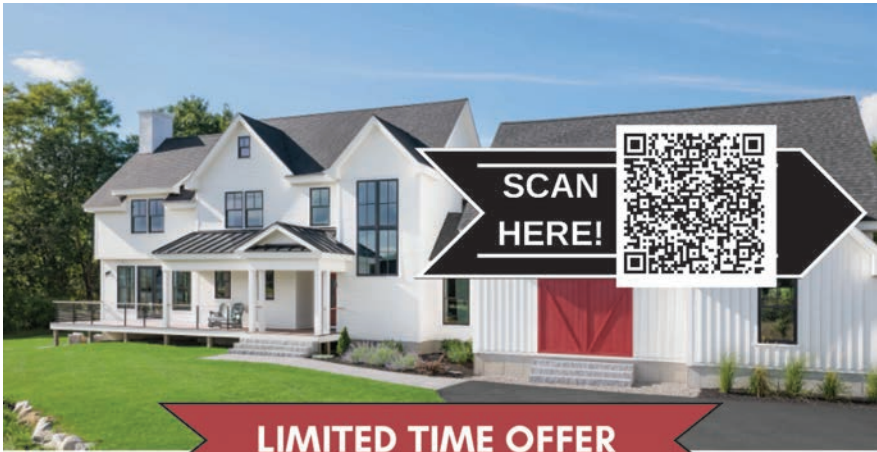
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signs and a favorite Adirondak chair with various beach scenes painted by a friend.

She likes the privacy created by trees and shrubs. When she moved in, reblooming lilac bushes were small to start with. Now they create a natural fence.

“I had no idea they would get so huge,” she reflects. “It ended up a good thing. It’s nice for privacy.



People can’t see in the back.”

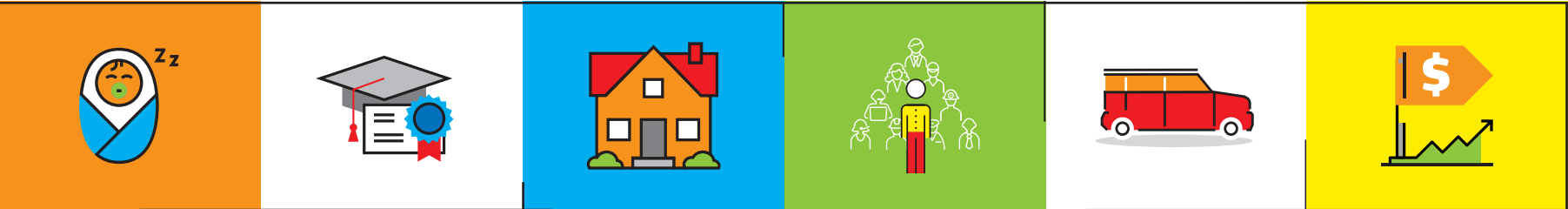
Her backyard also features tall trees. Beyond the trees and her grassy property is a walking and bike trail.

“Lots of times, I sit outside and watch people walk on the path. I love my huge backyard.”

She recently attended a class reunion, and, during conversations, one of her classmates posed a question to the group, asking, “What brings you joy?”

Bowden responded quickly.

“My patio. I love my flowers, my pool,” she reflects. “It brings me joy to sit outside in nature on my patio looking at my flowers.” ■

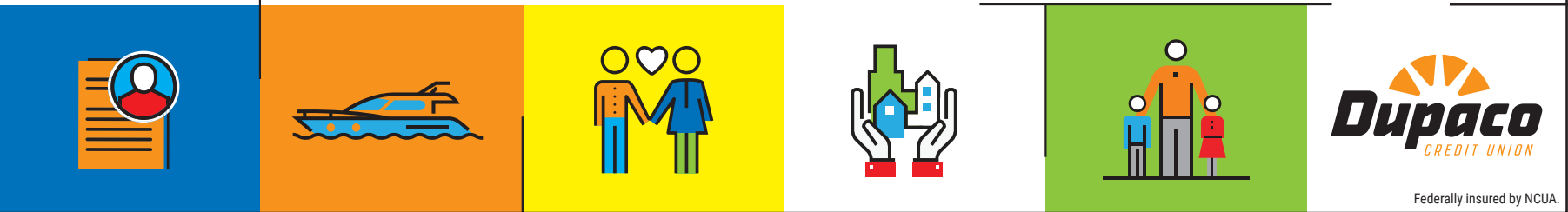


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# When one project leads to another

Driveway repair spurs new garage floor.

Starting a home improvement project can often lead to additional work, whether it turns out to be a larger undertaking than anticipated or sparks a desire to do even more. Such was the case for Char Robinson.

“I started actually with my driveway because it was all cracked. It was uneven,” she says. “I do my own snow blowing in the wintertime, and when you have that unevenness, all that cracked cement, it’s really hard to use a snow blower. I can’t even have anybody come and push the snow because they would just really make a mess of the concrete.”

Robinson says she was surprised by how excited she gets about her new concrete.

“I don’t know how anybody could get excited about concrete,” she says. “But I can’t tell you how many compliments I get on my driveway. It’s silly, I mean, but it looks fabulous.”

It took Robinson awhile to decide to undertake the expense of fixing the driveway.

“I was super annoyed with the driveway for a long time, but I just felt like the expense would be too much,” she says. “But then I just finally decided it was so hard in the wintertime for me to do the snow myself. Now I feel like this winter I’m kind of looking forward to seeing how this works.”

Robinson says another benefit of the new driveway is its curb appeal. She says the house looks newer because of it.

“That’s what you should hopefully hear is that people are a little jealous of what you have because you made the right decision,” she says. “I just seriously never thought who would care about that, but it does make a difference.”

After improving her driveway, Robinson realized it was time to improve another part of her house.



Char Robinson had her crumbling driveway taken out and new concrete poured to make it easier to clear snow and to improve the curb appeal of her home. She followed that up with having a new garage floor put in that makes the area feel like an extension of the home’s interior.



“I started with the driveway and then my garage floor just looked terrible. It was all pitted from salt or that brine they use on the roads in the wintertime,” she says.

Like the new driveway, Char says the new garage floor makes her home feel newer.

“I love the garage floor just because it looks awesome, and it’s part of the house. So, when I’m in it, it looks like another room extension,” she says, adding, “I painted all the walls, so it’s really clean and nice and light, and it doesn’t look like a garage. I’m kind of a neat freak, so everything’s got its place now, so, it looks good.”

Robinson has a few tips about what one can do when going down their home improvement path.

“I just say get recommendations and get several bids because there’s quite a difference in price on some of these things,” she says, “I would definitely shop around. Take your time. I know it’s kind of a pain, but it’s worth your time to shop around and also get recommendations from friends or family.” ■



Char Robinson’s new garage floor is aesthetically pleasing and easy to clean.



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