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By Kathy Bowen Stolz



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Giselle Bernard
Publisher



Dear Readers:

Can you believe that we are already heading into the month of June? June means higher temperatures and humidity – two factors that can stress the body's ability to cool itself.

Heat illness becomes a special concern of mine since I've experienced heat exhaustion before – a pretty scary situation, to say the least. I'm not much on drinking a lot of water and found out first hand that working or playing in the sun's heat while not hydrating is a recipe for heat-related illnesses.

There are three major forms of heat illnesses: heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke, with heat stroke being a life-threatening condition.

Heat Cramps

Heat cramps or muscle spasms are caused by heavy sweating and affect the arms, legs or stomach. Although heat cramps don't cause permanent damage, they can be quite painful. To prevent them, drink electrolyte solutions such as Gatorade during the day and eat more fruits like bananas.

Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is a condition more serious than heat cramps. When you don't drink enough fluids to replace what you're sweating away, your internal air-conditioning system becomes horribly overworked. The symptoms include headache, heavy sweating, intense thirst, dizziness, fatigue, loss of coordination, nausea, impaired judgment, loss of appetite, hyperventilation, tingling in hands or feet, anxiety, cool moist skin, weak and rapid pulse (120-200) and low-to-normal blood pressure.

People suffering these symptoms should be moved to a cool location, such as a shaded area or air-conditioned building. Have them lie down with their feet slightly elevated. Loosen their clothing and apply cool, wet cloths or fan them. Have them drink water or electrolyte drinks. Have them checked by medical personnel. Victims of heat exhaustion should avoid strenuous activity for at least a day, and they should continue to drink water to replace lost body fluids.

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke kills and happens when the body has been depleted of its water and salt. The body's temperature rises to deadly levels. Someone usually experiences heat cramps and/or heat exhaustion before experiencing symptoms of heat stroke, but not always. Heat stroke is sometimes mistaken for heart attack, especially in a work setting.

The early symptoms of heat stroke include a high body temperature (103 degrees F), an absence of sweating, hot red or flushed dry skin, rapid pulse, difficulty breathing, constricted pupils and any/all of the signs or symptoms of heat exhaustion. In an advanced state of heat stroke, the victim may exhibit bizarre behavior and have high blood pressure, seizures or convulsions, collapse, loss of consciousness and a body temperature of over 108° F. It is vital to lower a heat stroke victim's body temperature. Seconds count. Pour water on him/her, fan the victim, or apply cold packs. Call 911 to get an ambulance on the way as soon as possible.

To prevent heat-related illnesses take the following health tips into consideration:

- Condition yourself for working in hot environments. Start slowly, then build up to more physical work. Allow your body to adjust over a few days.
- Drink lots of liquids. Electrolyte drinks are good for replacing both water and minerals lost through sweating. Never drink alcohol and avoid caffeinated beverages like coffee and pop.
- Take a break if you notice you're getting a headache or you start feeling overheated. Cool down for a few minutes before going back to work.
- Wear light-weight, light-colored clothing when working out in the sun.
- Take advantage of fans and air-conditioners.
- And, believe it or not, get enough sleep at night.

A little knowledge goes a long way in avoiding heat illnesses....

Giselle Bernard, Owner/Publisher



InStyle Stages to Sell

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Staging luxury homes makes them sell fast. And that is where InStyle Staging steps in. This Houston company, which is owned by Selena Mackay, interior designer, and John Paul Tamborello, builder, utilizes the skills of its owners to create the kind of Wow! factor that will cause potential buyers to say “I want to live here” when they enter a house InStyle has staged.

“Our commitment is to make the house user-friendly, beautiful and upscale,” Selena said. “We don’t take generic furniture from discount stores to stage our houses.” Instead, they create a custom interior design, staging it as if it were a project she was designing for a particular client of her interior design company, Studio Mackay. “Our luxury staging gives buyers the ability to picture themselves in these homes without wondering what they will do with the interiors...without having to hire a designer.”

The staging company works for builders and realtors, leasing their staging elements for three months and charging 1 percent of the selling price. Their niche is new

construction houses priced in the \$2 million-and-above bracket – homes that are usually 6,000 to 10,000 sq. ft. A typical installation starts by designing the décor’s look, which takes around three weeks, followed by a four-day installation.

Both she and Tamborello have extensive experience in what clients at this level want in their homes, Mackay said. “We think about how people live in the neighborhoods we work in and the architecture of the house. We focus on what a buyer wants,” she added. All five houses they have staged since starting the business in late 2017 sold within the three-month lease, with two selling within 10 days.

Selena said they work to stay consistent with the architectural design of the houses. Their three goals are to make the house feel welcoming and comfortable, to make the house feel more luxurious with a rich environment and to redirect attention away from any objections that a buyer may have, such as spaces that may be challenging to furnish. “We do what the house calls for; we make the



interiors work for living,” she stated.

“We can brighten up the space and give it a bit of personality. We feature giant rugs, amazing artwork and high-end furniture. We use grounded neutral shades with a punch of color in pillows, accessories and artwork. We want people to see themselves living there as they walk from room to room,” Selena commented.

Although they don’t stack dishes in the cabinets or food in the pantry, they do use decorative pieces to make the kitchens memorable. They put large accessories on oversized islands to provide color and proportion. Every room should be beautiful, the kitchen should not be an exception, according to Selena. In the bathrooms and bedrooms, they stage with soaps, towels, pillows and linens, although they put nothing in the closets. “I don’t like clutter. I like clean,” Mackay noted.

While they want to show how spaces might be used and furnished, they are careful not to include any elements,

such as religious symbols, that might offend prospective buyers.

InStyle has a great team that shares the vision of the company. They live and breathe good design. “We have a collaborative way of working. Everybody takes responsibility. John and I direct and edit, but many times we are on our hands and knees making a house amazing!” Selena said.

Mackay and Tamborello partner with local art galleries to showcase high-end art in every room of the house, according to the company website, www.instylestaginghouston.com. “Adding fine art and turning these homes into a gallery turns an everyday showing into an amazing experience.”

InStyle rents some of the artwork from galleries and owns other pieces. “There’s a lot of transitional art on the market featuring happy colors and uplifting images,” Selena said. “These pieces elevate the space and are available for sale

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Greymark Construction Offers 'Wow' Remodeling

Refrigerators have special significance for Leslie King. As a college student selling (or leasing?) dormitory refrigerators, they gave Leslie her first “real” income. Now, as owner of Houston’s Greymark Construction, a design/build firm, refrigerators and their placement are a focal point for a business that specializes in kitchen, bathroom and whole house remodeling, improving the livability of a home.

King prefers remodeling “because we get to go in and do the fun stuff. We get to do the ‘wow’ that the homeowner couldn’t afford when they built the house.” Greymark does about 40 projects a year.

With the average cost of a kitchen at \$75,000 without appliances and the average cost of a bath at \$35,000 for a home that sells for \$500,000, homeowners get more than their money’s worth at re-sale with remodeling, she said. For example, Greymark just increased the value of a \$1.2 million home to at least \$1.4 million by renovating the kitchen and whole first floor for \$185,000.

Being a woman can be an advantage in the male-dominated construction industry, King said. “I understand how a kitchen should work because I cook. I ask things like if someone is right- or left-handed so we can place the dishwasher in the best spot. I also ask How many pairs of shoes, purses, belts or scarves do you have? (when doing a

closet). Men don’t think of things like that.”

King said she is likely to get jobs when the wife makes the decision on a remodeling project, but is likely to lose a job to a male competitor when it involves “engineering,” such as an addition to a house, when a man makes the decisions.

(Not sure about several things in this paragraph.) But King is comfortable competing against men because she’s been doing it for most of her professional life. After earning her degree in marketing from Sam Houston State University, Leslie determined that she wanted to earn \$1000 a month and be able to set her own hours. Her dad encouraged her to look to the oil fields for opportunity. With two job offers, she joined IMCO which was a division of Halliburton., in September 1979 where she was one of 10 women among a couple of thousand men on the payroll. She also sold recycled pipe thread protectors for a while and worked as a restaurant management trainee for Marriott Hotels for two years.

But it was her year selling real estate that really shaped her future. Divorced, with two small daughters to support, King started buying older homes in 1992 to remodel and resell while selling properties for others. She learned construction techniques from the “two old codgers” she hired as



carpenters. Although some men presumed that she couldn't understand technical elements of construction because she didn't wear a tool belt, she asked a lot of questions and learned everything she could.

She said what really helped her improve her skills was joining the Remodelers Council in 1997 and a peer-review groups, Remodelers Advantage. She now meets with 11 other remodelers from across the country twice a year to sharpen her skills.

Back when she started in 1995, she heard comments that she didn't know what she was doing, but those comments have disappeared over the years, she said.

No doubt Greymark's many awards have had something to do with those comments disappearing. Greymark Construction won the Greater Houston Builders Association Grand Remodeler prize from 2010 and 2015, in addition to the Chrysalis Award for the nation's best Universal Design. Greymark received a Texas Lone Star award for Best Historic Renovation.

Also, the Better Business Bureau gave Greymark its award for excellence from 2009 through 2019 in recognition of its A+ rating. Texas Association of Builders gave Greymark its Star Awards for Best Whole House Remodel

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Keynote Speakers Announced for the 2019 Sunbelt Builders Show™

The Texas Association of Builders (TAB) is excited to announce Robert Van Winkle, aka Vanilla Ice, Larry Haines and Robert Dietz as the keynote speakers for the 2019 Sunbelt Builders Show™. The two-day trade show and four-day conference is slated for August 6 – 9 at the Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas.

Vanilla Ice has signed on as the Show's opening keynote speaker for August 7 at 9:30 a.m., sponsored by Great American Insurance Group. Vanilla Ice, known for his world-famous rapping and reality TV personality, will be speaking to the homebuilding industry about his successful career, holding a Q&A and performing a couple of his most famous songs. He will also be making a guest appearance on the trade show floor. He is a successful real-estate entrepreneur, and has more than 15 years of hands-on home

improvement experience. The Dallas native partnered with the DIY Network in 2010 and launched The Vanilla Ice Project. Currently in its ninth season, The Vanilla Ice Project focuses on budget-friendly flips and interesting tweaks that make a big difference with jaw-dropping results. In 2011, The Vanilla Ice Project won Best Home Show by The Factual Entertainment Awards.

The following day, the founder of Sunconomy, Larry Haines, and National Association of Home Builders' (NAHB) Senior V.P. and Chief Economist Robert Dietz will share the stage at 9:30 a.m. The duo will focus on the future of housing. Haines will educate Sunbelt attendees on how 3D-printed components might be used in conventional home construction now and in the future. Dr. Dietz will provide the latest economic trends and updates affecting the residential homebuilding industry.



The Sunbelt Builders Show™ is offering free registration for residential homebuilders for a limited time. Click the following to register, see a complete schedule of events, social events and show floor.

For more information on the Sunbelt Builders Show™, go to SunbeltBuildersShow.com or contact Angelica Stehling at Angelica@TexasBuilders.org to promote your company to hundreds of Texas homebuilders.

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Modern Style Latest Trend in Kitchen, Bath Design

By Linda Jennings

Today's finest homes include products that are well appointed with quality features to provide years of enjoyment. From colorful hues and matte finishes to stone materials and vintage-inspired fixtures, the most successful builders know the finishing touches make all the difference. The look is modern and metropolitan with an element of surprise elevating the design status.



Stone Look Hudson Tub

MTI Baths captures the essence of today's hottest looks in bathroom design with its popular Hudson tub. The freestanding composite tub is crafted from high-grade minerals to offer the trendy stone look that consumers and designers are clamoring for. Its vintage-inspired appeal brings a fresh twist to a modern farmhouse aesthetic, giving this tub exceptional flexibility to complement a variety of decors. Measuring 66" x 32" x 23", the Hudson features a graceful oval silhouette with a soft, rolled lip and embossed linear detailing. A deep bathing well and sloped walls with integrated lumbar support provide ample space for bathers to enjoy a supremely comfortable soaking experience.

The Hudson is part of MTI's renowned Designer Collection and is available as a soaker or air bath. Its mineral composite blend is created from high-grade minerals mined from local Georgia quarries. Each piece is treated with a high-performance polyresin coating, resulting in a beautiful glossy white finish that is highly insulating and keeps bath water warm longer. The non-porous surface is extremely durable, resistant to stains and scratches and is easy to clean and maintain. As with all MTI tubs, Hudson tubs are crafted in the United States, finished by hand to exacting quality standards and covered by a 10-year warranty.

Colorful, Contemporary and Blue

Adding a pop of color in the bathroom is a popular trend



in contemporary design, and ICERA is leading the way with its Canto vanity collection in fresh finish options. White bathrooms are the perfect backdrop for the Canto vanity in a stunning shade of deep blue with striking metal trim that showcases its geometric form. The vanity creates a dramatic, yet refined, focal point that brings a touch of elegance and urban chic to the bathroom.

The furniture-style vanity is notable for its distinctive angles and solid wood throughout. The solid stone countertop includes a matching backsplash, while the vanity cabinet includes a soft-close drawer with dovetail joinery. Two deep drawers offer ample space for towels and toiletries, including a divided top drawer for organizing smaller items. ICERA also offers coordinating mirrors for a beautifully cohesive finished look.

Matte Black Is Back

Matte black is quickly replacing traditional metallic finishes as the "it look" in today's fashion-forward kitchens. Lenova recently introduced a sophisticated matte black finish for two of its newest kitchen faucets, and it's a chic look that is



both dramatic and elegant. Lenova's interpretation of black is a more refined iteration of the glossy version that was popular during the 1980s. This soft, flat finish goes equally well with classic white and gray kitchens or more modern, colorful decors.

Black is a smart choice for the kitchen because of its neutrality (black goes with everything!) as well as its durability. Lenova incorporates proprietary PVD processing into its manufacturing system to create a matte finish that is long-lasting and easy to maintain.

For more information on these new products visit websites mtibaths.com, icerausa.com, lenovasinks.com.



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remainder of 2019 through the end of 2020, a total of more than 30 homes. “John and I know the market so well that Smith Family Homes trusts us and gives us free rein,” Selena said.

Because they stage very large homes, they often have to create custom furniture pieces, such as consoles and tables, to fit the spaces. Tamborello, owner of Top Notch Design Renovations, works with several tradesmen to create those pieces, which are also for sale.

Selena and John are creating an inventory of furnishings that can be used in their staging company. They regularly buy pieces rather than rent items from furniture companies. Fortunately John Paul owns a strip of warehouses where they can store their items.

They use two moving companies, who are exceptional, according to Selena, to transport their furnishings in and out of storage. The movers wrap all of the pieces in plastic and wear white gloves to handle the artwork.

She said InStyle Staging also has a furniture cleaner on call, but she has been surprised that they have seldom needed his services because the realtors are diligent about protecting the staging company’s pieces. And their diligence is a plus because Selena loves to decorate with white furniture!

Admitting that both John and she are Type A personalities,

Continued from page 5

with the home.”

Their primary client at this time is Smith Family Homes, a custom building firm that has contracted with InStyle to select all of its finishes and stage all of its homes for the



Selena said they want to grow, grow, grow the company to include a retail outlet and perhaps collaborate with other partners. Stating that it's always great to reinvent yourself, after 20 years as an interior designer she would like to evolve her design business into a service that does not require "hiring a designer." In a perfect world, the home buyer would buy the house and the furniture, and her work would be done!

The biggest surprise they've had so far is how well the business is doing, she said. They expected to stage one house per month, but now they've got four more on the horizon.

Although they're putting all of the money earned back into the business' operation, she said the company is a success if for no other reason than "how happy we feel when we do this!"

"I love doing the staging. It's like Install Day every day. It's exciting to see the builders walk in and be blown away because the staging looks so good. It's really fun!"

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over \$500,000 and Best Kitchen over \$100,000. Other national recognitions are being named one of Remodeling Magazine’s Big 50 and Best Whole House Remodel from Professional Remodeler Magazine.

With so much crystal on the shelves, nowadays almost all of Greymark’s clients ask if theirs will be an award-winning job! “Everybody wants to be award-winning,” she adds.

Leslie King is now recognized as a leader in the construction industry. Past president of the Remodelers Council of the Greater Houston Builders Association, Leslie was also president of the Greater Houston Builders Association in 2014, the second woman and the second remodeler to lead the organization long dominated by male custom builders.

King created Greymark Express in 2011 as a way to weather the economic downturn and to expand the company’s market area beyond Houston’s Inner Loop and I-10 West Corridor into the suburbs. Unique to the Houston market, Greymark Express promises to complete a bathroom remodel in two weeks if no plumbing fixtures or walls have to be moved. “In the down economy small

projects were the only thing homeowners could afford. Greymark Express allowed us to get our foot in door with clients, which is huge.” Those bath remodeling projects were \$15,000-\$20,000 and up. People are now spending more money, King said.

But when the economy soured in 2009, most custom builders became remodelers to keep their businesses afloat, she said. However, they didn’t realize how different remodeling was from ground-up building. Suddenly their clients were around every corner, watching them as they worked, because they were living in the project, not viewing it from the street.

These custom builders asked King what was the secret to remodeling. “Communication is a huge part. That and listening.”

While hearing has been something of a challenge for Leslie who has life-long severe hearing loss, listening comes easily to her. King keeps Greymark focused on its clients’ satisfaction. Its goal is to keep its customers happy every day. She said they do that by anticipating problems and eliminating surprises as well as finishing projects on time and on budget. She cites 90 percent of business coming from referrals and repeat customers.

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She uses BuilderTrend software, updated by her field people, so that clients can track their projects' progress on-line. "Clients love it," she said, because people are becoming more technically focused.

Since 2009 she has used GuildQuality, an independent survey company, to track Greymark's customer satisfaction results. Greymark's website links viewers to the results so that they can read the comments for themselves.

"People hire us because we know what we're doing and they trust us. Those are huge things," she stated. "We're being hired for a service, for our expertise. We're able to establish trust from the beginning."

King refocused her business in 2004 from just building to design-build because she could control the costs that way. "If a client brings us architectural plans, it is usually outside the client's budget. For example, one project's budget was \$200,000, but came in at \$400,000. If we design it, it stays within the client's budget. We make sure we anticipate every expense. It's a win-win for the client."

Leslie said she prefers design work but also does and sales. "My job is to give ideas and to anticipate the best operating function" to meet the homeowners' needs. There is an Architect on staff along with an estimator, interior designer, office manager and marketing person. Her oldest daughter who is a CPA has come on board as Vice-President and will be taking over the business in about 5 years. The rest of the staff is in the field.

One reason King chose Greymark as the company name

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back in 1994 is because it lent itself to succession, which is something she thinks about these days. She now has a succession plan in place with her daughter and looks forward to watching her take it to the next level of success.

Greymark and its founder, Leslie King, have made their mark on the Houston building scene. And it's an award-winning mark. Just look at all of the crystal on the shelves if you don't think so.



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