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**FALL
HOME &
CAR CARE**

SPECIAL

**Home Maintenance
Car Care Tips
Area Businesses**

New ownership, new focus

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Old and new, big and small

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A big business to serve small town people

Geneva Lumber Company offers the big stuff without the big attitude

By **KATHY PAULSEN**
Staff Writer

In this day of high competition, it is nice to know there are those who still cater to small town area people. It is nice to be able to do business with people who you know and trust and you can call them by their first name. That is one of the nice things about Geneva Lumber Company. Another is that you can shop hometown for things big and small without going through mess and confusion like you find in big box stores. You come away with the feeling they are there for you and your convenience — and not just for profit.

Shopping local has its advantages not just for you, but for the community. More and more we are seeing a realization that some things just do better in a rural setting.

When the lumberyard began in Geneva as RWP Inc., a large part of the business was to build and supply pallets and crates to many industrial businesses in Southern Minnesota. People started asking for more: accessibility for lumber related projects, home design and drafting. RWP Inc. was owned by David Richards and Brett Richards, who have moved on to focus on cabinet and flooring sales as well as general contracting.

Jon Carlson and Tait Ingvaldson, former employees, decided to purchase the lumberyard in December of 2013 and it became Geneva Lumber Company.

Jon has been in the construction business for 20 years and had his own company for 11 years. In 2008, Jon began his career in sales and design for RWP. Due to Jon's experience as a former contractor and his knowledge of estimating



JON CARLSON (left) and TAIT INGVALDSON (right) are proud of their newly-owned, newly-renamed operation (formerly RWP or Richards Wood Products) which has changed from a cabinet maker to a general lumber facility for the area. Star Eagle photo by Kathy Paulsen

and design, customers can bring in ideas for a new home, addition or renovation of their current home and he will provide them with plans, a thorough estimate and advice to help them complete their project with satisfaction.

Tait's knowledge of the lumber industry started 17 years ago when he began working in RWP's pallet shop. As manager of the pallet facility, Tait ordered and kept inventories of the necessary lumber to keep the pallet shop running smooth. RWP's pallet shop was a sizeable business and served a necessary need at the time, but unfortunately in this day and age things can change rapidly and that part of the business closed about two years

ago. At that point Tait began to work in the lumberyard and is highly motivated to deal with new home design and construction needs and major remodeling projects, both for home and business.

Geneva Lumber Company can handle big and small projects including building new homes, garages, business facilities, cabins or summer homes, utility buildings as well as home additions, decks, basement and family room remodeling projects. And we can't forget to mention the need for new shingles, siding or general repair projects.

Jon and Tait have designed, estimated and supplied materials for 10 new homes and numerous remodel-

ing projects this year after they took over ownership. Jon feels new home construction is on the rise because of an ever increasing need for housing and renovation.

They are not above helping people construct what may be regarded as "small" projects. They have materials ready and available for repairs and upkeep of farm buildings too.

Jon and Tait encourage contractors, and "do-it-yourselfers" to stop in and discuss plans and pricing. Contractors are a huge part of sales in the lumber business and to encourage contractors to bring their projects to Geneva Lumber, con-

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Star Eagle Fall Home & Car Care Special

Thursday, October 16, 2014

Reed Waller, Editor • Tracie Rosacker, Advertising Manager

Is your home ready for winter's challenges?

(StatePoint) It's time to start preparing your home to make sure it can efficiently handle colder weather.

"There are many small, low-hassle items you can complete to 'winterize' your home," says David Andreozzi, principal of Andreozzi Architects and the American Institute of Architects' (AIA) National Chair of CRAN, the AIA's Custom Residential Architects Network. "Prepping your home for the season ensures you aren't dealing with major issues when they are harder to tackle, and can prevent costly repairs come springtime."

To help homeowners prepare, Andreozzi offers the following advice.

Check Chimneys and Gutters

Regular checks of your chimneys and gutters are both safety-smart and wallet-friendly. Fireplace dampers should be closed and functioning properly to protect against drafts and keep heating costs down. Leaving a damper open or using a broken one is the equivalent to



Check chimneys and gutters regularly.

leaving a window open when the air conditioner is running.

While sometimes not as noticeable as a chimney draft, ice is another danger. It can build up in gutters quickly if there is debris there from previous seasons. In order for ice to melt and drain properly, drains must be clear. Clean your gutters when it's warm to prevent clogs and costly replacements.

Remember Watering Systems

This is especially important for

new home buyers who may not think to look for this. Water trapped in an outdoor faucet, spigot or irrigation system can cause a pipe to burst if ice settles inside. Make it part of your winterizing routine to ensure that outdoor plumbing and pipes are clear before temperatures drop.

Designing for Weather

In the design process of your home, it is important that your home is sealed correctly to account

for local weather. An architect can advise on how to prevent unwanted drafts. If you have an older home or apartment, use self-adhesive weather stripping to seal cracks in windows and doors, too.

Create a Timetable

The change of seasons means maintenance. Create a checklist of tasks with a timetable so you are never scrambling at the last minute. Small items that often slip between the cracks can be taken care of in a timely fashion — like changing batteries in smoke detectors or cleaning the pilots of the heating system.

Andreozzi recommends using a professional twice a year to help tick off some of the trickier items, such as sealing windows. To ensure that you're hitting all of the pain points, an architect can help you formulate a full checklist to make the most out of your prep work.

To find an architect in your area, visit <http://architectfinder.aia.org/>.

By preparing now, you can save time and money later.

Lumber

from Page 2

tractor discounts are available to licensed contractors in the area. Their major customer base is about a 45-mile radius, including Albert Lea, Austin, Owatonna and all of the surrounding communities.

There are busy now trying to help people finish projects before the snow flies and also are starting to

work on new projects for 2015. They have all the family home needs: windows, roofing, stonework, siding, doors, decking, along with new home addition designs.

Geneva Lumber handles Andersen, Hayfield and Jeldwen windows and deals with four companies for shingling needs. They also have an insulation-blowing machine that contractors and home-

owners can use for insulation in attics — something to think about with winter soon arriving.

They advertise, "Under New Ownership" with competitive pricing, free estimates and don't forget the personal experience and time to discuss their customers' needs. That means a lot. Geneva Lumber Company has a 1500-square-foot showroom on the west edge of Geneva near the Geneva Pool and

athletic complex.

Stop in and check out the possibilities. They are open Monday through Friday 7:30 to 5 and Saturdays 8 to noon. They are there to help you even on weekends if an emergency should arise. Give Jon or Tait a call and they will be glad to accommodate. Reach them at 507-256-0045 or 256-7580.

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Five good reasons to replace your old AC in fall

(StatePoint) Before you turn off your AC system for the season, consider having it checked out by a certified contractor. If it's older or has been giving you problems, you might want to replace it."

"It may not be top of mind, but fall is actually the ideal time to think about your home's cooling system," says Frank Landwehr, VP of Marketing at Emerson Climate Technologies.

There are five reasons why consumers who consider this important home upgrade during the off-season often have much better outcomes, say the experts at AC & Heating Connect.

- **Contractor considerations:** Give yourself plenty of time to identify the best AC contractor for your installation. Contractors in between cooling and heating seasons will be more available to help solve your specific problems.

- **New features:** Learn about the latest technology and features available for HVAC systems, as a lot has changed in the past 20 years. Consider systems with features ranging from superior humidity reduction to noise reduction to remote control systems and energy-efficient programmable thermostats.† "Dual fuel" heat pumps that can use either electricity or natural

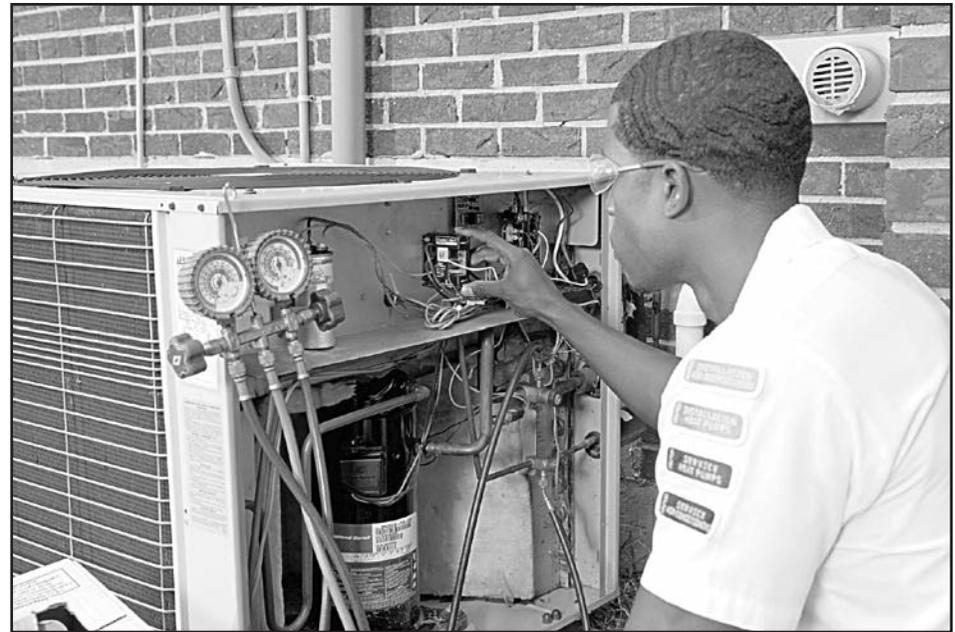
gas for heating are another recent innovation to consider.

- **Zombie heat pump:** So-called "zombie" heat pumps appear to be alive and running, but in reality are not performing optimally, or at all. If your air conditioner doubles as a heat pump, fall is the time to have your system checked out for the heating season. Fall is also a good time to have a conventional furnace checked out by a contractor. If it's older like the AC unit, you might be better off having them both replaced at once.

- **Recalculations:** Have your contractor run new calculations on your home. Changes since that old AC system was installed can affect your needs. For example, if you added insulation, upgraded to more efficient windows, knocked out walls or added a room, you might need a different system size than before — and the wrong system can be problematic.

A system that's too small won't keep up on the hottest days. A system that's too large will cycle too much, causing wide swings in temperature — and won't necessarily remove all the humidity from your home.

Further, if you plan to close the AC vents in seldom-used rooms, look for a system with at least two steps of



Have your system checked out to make sure it's really performing the way it appears.

capacity modulation. Closing room vents and doors effectively makes your house appear smaller to your HVAC system, which could significantly damage the system or cause it to fail prematurely.

- **Regulations:** Know the latest government regulations and rebates before you buy. New regulations going into effect January 1, 2015, might affect the minimum efficiency standard in your

region. Give yourself time to consider whether you want to replace your system ahead of the change.

Replacing HVAC systems in fall can be a smart maneuver. By planning ahead, you can make smarter choices for your home and your comfort.

Check out www.ac-heatingconnect.com for free resources and to learn more about what type of system might be best for your home.

Prevent your heating bills from going through the roof

(StatePoint) Heating your home can be a costly endeavor. But you don't have to make your family suffer in shivering silence to save some money. There are plenty of steps you can take to optimize your heating efforts, as well as prep your home for several months of cool weather.

- **Check and maintain your insulation.** Improperly insulated walls, floors, attics, basements and crawl spaces drain away heat and can encourage mold and mildew.

- **Add weather stripping and caulk** around windows and doors to prevent drafts which waste energy and money.

- **Install a programmable thermostat** that shuts itself off during the day when you're away and at night when you're asleep. This will keep you comfortable when you're home and save you money when you're not.

- **Keep vents and returns free of obstructions.** Don't lay carpet over vents, place furniture over or in front



Be sure you have a qualified HVAC/R technician.

of them or obstruct the flow of air.

- **Keep your air filters clean.** Check them every couple of weeks and change them as directed by the manufacturer.

- **Let the sun shine in by opening curtains on cold days.** Get heavy drapes to keep things cozy at night.

- **Review last year's energy bills.** If your heating costs are drastically higher this year, a qualified HVAC/R technician may be able to diagnose the problem. Schedule such inspections twice annually, even if you aren't experiencing any detectable issues.

- **When choosing a contractor** for installation or maintenance, important factors must be taken into consideration. A qualified HVAC/R technician is a skilled professional with proven knowledge who has passed specialized tests. So look for a technician certified by North American Technician Excellence (NATE), the nation's largest independent non-profit certification body for HVAC/R technicians.

Even the most eco-friendly, high-efficiency products and appliances can waste money and energy if they're not installed, serviced, and maintained properly. Work with certified technicians to ensure your HVAC/R equipment is delivering on its promised

energy efficiency.

- **Consider alternatives to conventional heating.** For example, geothermal heating systems use the earth's natural heat and are among the most efficient and energy-conserving heating technologies currently available.

- **Replacing your system?** Purchase equipment with an ENERGY STAR label. High-efficiency systems reduce your impact on the environment and can also save you money. You may also be eligible for a Federal Tax Credit. Check with your local NATE contractor to determine qualifying models. Also, for optimal performance be sure to select the proper size system for your home.

For resources and more tips on home heating and cooling visit www.hvacradvice.com.

By following a few key tips, lowering your heating bill and increasing your family's comfort can go hand in hand.

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Putting your property in good hands

Keck's Repair grew from home-farm auto shop to large equipment service

By JESSICA LUTGENS
Staff Writer

When it comes to vehicle repair, the ideal situation is quality work that doesn't cost an arm and a leg – and while prices sometimes can't be avoided, finding a place with honest, fair and knowledgeable employees isn't easy, either.

Keck's Repair is an auto/truck/tractor repair and service provider, located on County Road 7 between New Richland and Owatonna (7123 SW 82nd Ave, Owatonna, MN). Owned by Brian Keck and his wife, Jodi, Keck's services everything from cars, trucks and semis to farm and construction equipment.

"It's got to have a starter," Brian joked. He and Jodi have four children, three girls and a boy, and have lived in the area most of their lives.

"So far, I've made it about a mile and a half from where I was born," Brian said.

Brian first started the business full-time in 1987 with only himself as the mechanic. The original location was his "home farm," not far from where Keck's is now. After graduating from Owatonna High School, Brian attended college in Albert Lea to become a mechanic.

"We farmed, but back then there wasn't money in farming, so you had to get another job," Brian explained. "It took ten years just to hire the first guy. In 2000 we moved to the new shop here and expanded from cars to trucks and other large equipment. I was able to hire three or four more guys then, and it's grown from there."

"We started working on more heavy duty equipment than just auto," Jodi added.

Today, Keck's has 18 employees: six mechanics, a service manager, two secretaries, eight truck drivers and their dispatcher. They cover roughly a 20-mile circle surround-



BRIAN AND JODI KECK and their truck are ready to tackle any vehicle repair, large or small.

Star Eagle Photo by Jessica Lutgens

ing their location (including the towns of Owatonna, Ellendale, Geneva, Medford, Waseca, etc.), and despite their rural location have maintained good business.

"We haven't had many problems," Jodi said. "Word of mouth, that kind of thing. We've built up a good reputation."

"We've had people drive 70-plus miles to come here," Brian said. "People from Rochester, the Cities, Mankato. When there's a problem, we take care of it. Customers need to be able to trust that you won't do any unnecessary work or take advantage of them."

That's the philosophy at Keck's:

making sure the customer knows they're putting their faith, and property, in good hands.

"I always say, 'Fix it like you

problems," Brian said when asked about his favorite and least favorite aspects of his job. "That good feeling you get when you solve a tough

"I always say, 'Fix it like you would for your mom.'"

— Brian Keck

would for your mom," Brian said. "Trust is the main thing."

Nothing quite competes with experience – 27 years of experience, in Brian's case – but enjoying what you do also makes a difference.

"I like figuring out and fixing

problem."

And his least favorite?

"Having to tell people how much it will cost," he said. "I always tell people, 'It's not my fault, I'm just fixing it.'"

Keck's continued on 7



KECK'S REPAIR employs six mechanics who work on everything from cars and tractors to heavy duty equipment.
Star Eagle photos by Jessica Lutgens



Keck's from Page 6

Keck's also has an interesting feature: next to the shop is their family home.

"I like having the house here. I get exercise, since I walk to work,"

Brian joked.

At their previous home, the business was a couple miles down the road, lacking the convenience of the current location.

"Sometimes it's too convenient," Brian said with a laugh. "But it's better than where we were."

As for the future, Brian says they plan to continue to add to Keck's, hoping to double its current size, add more stalls for semis, and continue to expand the range of machines they service.

"We're going to keep fixing things," Brian said. "We're adding

more, new computer programs. We are a small business, and keeping up with new technology is expensive, but we're doing it. We're flexible enough to adapt to our customers; being small and in the country, we can still compete with anybody."

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Five tips for haunting your house this Halloween

(StatePoint) Halloween trails only behind Christmas when it comes to spending on decorations. Americans spent an estimated \$6.9 billion on Halloween in 2013, according to the National Retail Federation.

You can make more of your Halloween spending with a few spooky tips. Larry Kirchner, operator of the world's number-one rated haunted house, "The Darkness" in St. Louis, Missouri and owner of Hauntworld.com — a resource for building haunts, and a national directory of haunted houses, corn mazes, hayrides, and pumpkin patches — offers advice from his 25 years of experience building professional Halloween attractions.

Spooky Façade

Give your home's façade the abandoned, dusty look by spinning cobwebs and creepifying doors and windows. Hang aged and shredded curtains and add lights to each window. Change outdoor lights with flicker bulbs. Add spooky sounds for atmosphere. Lastly, you can purchase affordable computer graphic effects from HauntedHouseSupplies.com and with a TV pressed into your window, add anything from ghosts to werewolves to ghouls to your haunt.

Cemetery

Let the leaves collect for a few weeks in your yard. Add a gothic fence and a few zombies popping up through the ground. Add jute material or aged cheesecloth to your fence. Adding dead bodies under trees or creepy birds helps set the scene. Make gravestones by using a hot knife to carve foam into shapes, and even add an epitaph. To give the tombstone a real stone look, coat in plaster or lightweight concrete. Two simple doll rods driven into the ground can hold the tombstone in place. For a coffin, nail together 1x6 and 2x2 pine boards. For the extra effect, add mulch in front of the tombstones or use paving bricks in the shape of a grave filled with



CREATIVE DECORATING can set the stage for the holiday, turning your home into an exciting location for spooky fun. Photo by [Hauntworld](http://Hauntworld.com)

mulch.

Spooky Maze

Empty the garage and set up walls to create two to three scary scenes. If your garage isn't big enough, start the attraction inside and have it exit into the backyard graveyard. Start by sketching a design. You can build simple walls from plywood or drywall. For the old rotting look, cut odd shapes into the walls and screw in thin slats of wood behind the cut out holes. For best results, cake on plaster between the slats, then use raised wallpaper for the rest. Paint the entire wall one color and add some watered down black paint for an aged look.

Eerie Effects

Spooky sounds, special effects and lighting

make all the difference. Play a spooky soundtrack from a movie or find music online. Buy a couple of cheap skeleton speakers, available online for as low as \$10. For home haunters on a budget, air cannons or any loud noise are great for scares. Create special effects with fog machines and air compressors. Finally, dress up in your spookiest costume and make your guests scream for candy!

To prepare for next year, stock up on deeply discounted props the day after Halloween. For more inspiration on Halloween or haunted houses, visit www.Hauntworld.com.

This year, go beyond the basics and give your neighborhood a real scare!



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Tips to keep your family safe in weather-related emergencies

(StatePoint) Severe weather can pose a risk to your family's safety, especially if you don't have an emergency plan. Having a plan for what to do before, during and after severe weather can mean all the difference to your family's safety.

Unfortunately, only 36 percent of American households have discussed a safety plan for weather-related emergencies or power outages and about half of the households don't feel well prepared for a power outage, according to a recent survey conducted by Energizer.

Make sure to better equip you, your family and your home to deal with future storms.

- Designate a place to seek shelter. Designate a meeting place for your family to take shelter. A basement or the smallest, most-interior room on the lowest floor is safest for severe weather and tornados. In the event of a tropical storm or hurricane, evacuate the area if instructed by local authorities.

- Keep a portable light in every room: When the power goes out, you don't want to go digging through closets or drawers looking for that flashlight. Keep portable lights in every room in a handy place to ensure you're ready for outages.

A manually-powered light source offers insurance that you



PORTABLE LIGHTS should be kept in every room to help your family stay calm during power outages.

will be prepared, even if you run out of batteries. One long-lasting, compact solution is the Energizer Weatheready windup LED flashlight.

Also keep long-lasting battery-powered lights on hand. Consider Energizer Flashlights and Lanterns with Light Fusion Technology, which are compact, versatile and water-resistant. Lastly, be prepared for any kind of emergency scenario by ensuring you have a hands-free light: a lightweight and versatile headlight is a good bet.

- Make an emergency kit. Keep an emergency kit stocked with bottled water (one gallon per person per day for three days, according to government recommendations), canned food, copies of

vital personal information and a first aid kit with prescriptions.

It's all about simple solutions during emergencies, so look for multifunctional tools, such as an Energizer Emergency Weather Station, which acts as a light, radio and charging station.

- Check social media for

updates. Oftentimes communications can be limited during severe weather. Social media can give you the most up-to-date information from local government agencies and news outlets.

- Charge your devices. Make sure to charge your cell phone and ensure that your radio and flashlight have fresh batteries that are long-lasting and designed not to leak in your devices.

- Stock your vehicle. Severe weather can strike any time, so don't be caught unaware when you are on-the-go. Stock your vehicle with an emergency kit that contains all the essentials.

More tips on staying powered during storms can be found at www.Energizer.com.

You can keep your family safer by getting your home organized for severe weather and other emergencies.

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Simple tips to be more efficient in your garage

(StatePoint) Most everyone has a couple of tricks up their sleeve that make chores and tasks simpler. You likely have a few of your own — and once you develop a superior method of ticking off a to-do list item, it can be difficult to remember what your life was like before.

Here are a few such “lifehacks” straight from automotive experts, that you may not have thought of yourself, that can make your time in your garage more efficient and effective.

- **Better organization:** A well-maintained garage is a more pleasant place to work and can boost your efficiency. If your shovels, spades and other yard tools are stacked in a precarious pile, it’s time to create a better system.

Freelance automotive writer and photographer Maxwell Matthewson suggests screwing a ripped sheet of plywood to the studs of your shop or garage to hold yard and auto tools vertically and out of the way.

- **Spark plugs in a snap:** It can be tricky to remove spark plugs from hard to reach or extreme heat locations. The experts at JR Motorsports suggest attaching a vacuum to a length of rubber hose. With the proper size hose, this same method also works for nuts and bolts.

- **Play favorites:** Working on your vehicle?

Don’t dig to find your favorite tools, says Tom Gerrald of Tripp Gerrald Motorsports. Save time when looking for the right wrench by using tape to color code the tools you reach for first.

- **Stay in place:** The professionals at JR Motorsports mark their nuts and bolts with a paint pen to ensure they haven’t moved or become loose.

- **Share:** Have your own DIY tips for the garage? Don’t keep them to yourself. Valvoline, the producer of automotive products, is spotlighting the creative “hacks” DIYers around the country are using to make life easier in the garage.

Submit your best ideas, tips and tricks that demonstrate how to improvise and boost efficiency, using the #GarageHacks hashtag at www.Facebook.com/Valvoline, www.Twitter.com/Valvoline and www.Instagram.com/Valvoline.

Check out the full album of Garage Hacks at <http://bit.ly/GarageHacks> for inspiration.

Is your time in the garage well-spent? With the right tricks, you can innovate the way you restore your ride, make home upgrades and maintain your yard.



Visit <http://bit.ly/GarageHacks> for inspiration and use the hashtag #GarageHacks to share your own creative tips. Photo (c) JR Motorsports

What to know about automating your home

(StatePoint) The “connected home” is one of the biggest areas of technical innovation today, with smart appliances, learning thermostats, app-driven lights, and intelligent door locks taking center stage in home improvement stores and magazines. In fact, by 2017, an estimated 36 million homes throughout North America and Europe will be smart.

For some consumers, the concept of a “smart home” can be overwhelming. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

The Basics

Home automation gives you remote and automatic control of a wide array of devices in your home — it’s ideal for convenience and control, and some devices can help with money savings. Home automation can also alert you to events that you might want to know about while you’re gone, like leaks, kids arriving home or security breaches.

For your furry family member, your smart home can distribute pre-determined amounts of food on a schedule so you don’t have to worry about your pet missing dinner while you’re stuck in traffic.

Is it Right for Your Home?

Not everyone is in a place to install a full home automation system — literally and financially, as apartment living, renting, low cash flow, expensive



A smartphone app makes it possible to open a door with a touch.

installation fees and advanced technical set-up can all be limitations.

However, with stand-alone home automation devices and apps, you can make your home smart without integrating a whole-home automation network. For example, smart locks, lighting, irons, coffee makers, security cameras and refrigerators can all be controlled by smartphones without the need for a fully integrated system.

First Things First

In a recent analyst report from NextMarket, the smart lock market will grow to \$3.6 billion worldwide by 2019. With security and access control

leading smart home product adoption, a logical place to start is at your front door. Consider trying Kwikset Kevo, powered by UniKey, which was the first smart lock on the market. It makes it possible to open the door by simply touching the deadbolt — without removing your smartphone from your purse or pocket.

Via the Kevo app, users can grant and revoke access to the house electronically, view a lock history and get notified when someone locks or unlocks the door without connecting to the home network or a power source. Available at many major retailers, it installs easily, within a few minutes, with just a Phillips head screwdriver, making it an excellent example of how one product can usher your home into the era of automation.

From there it’s easy to move on to take smarter control of your home appliances and lighting, and you can make as many or as few changes as your budget and imagination allow.

Smart home solutions are granting homeowners access to information and features that were previously unavailable. Bottom line: you don’t have to be rich or have a fully-connected home to enjoy the benefits. If you’re considering getting on board the trend, do your research and find the best technology and products for you.



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