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**FALL
HOME &
CAR CARE**

SPECIAL

**Home Maintenance
Car Care Tips
Area Businesses**

TV by the Lakeshore

Al's Dish Satellite Sales - Page 2

It all started on the family farm

Braaten Builders - Page 6

'You can't ask for a great deal more'

Al Grabau runs his satellite dish service from his St Olaf Lake home

By **KATHY PAULSEN**
Staff Writer

Al Grabau is more than happy having his own business right where he lives, just a few feet from the loveliest spot on St. Olaf Lake.

Al worked from a "storefront" for 20 years, but now has his own business out of his home. Al's business comes by "word of mouth," which must be good, as Al is as busy as he wants to be.

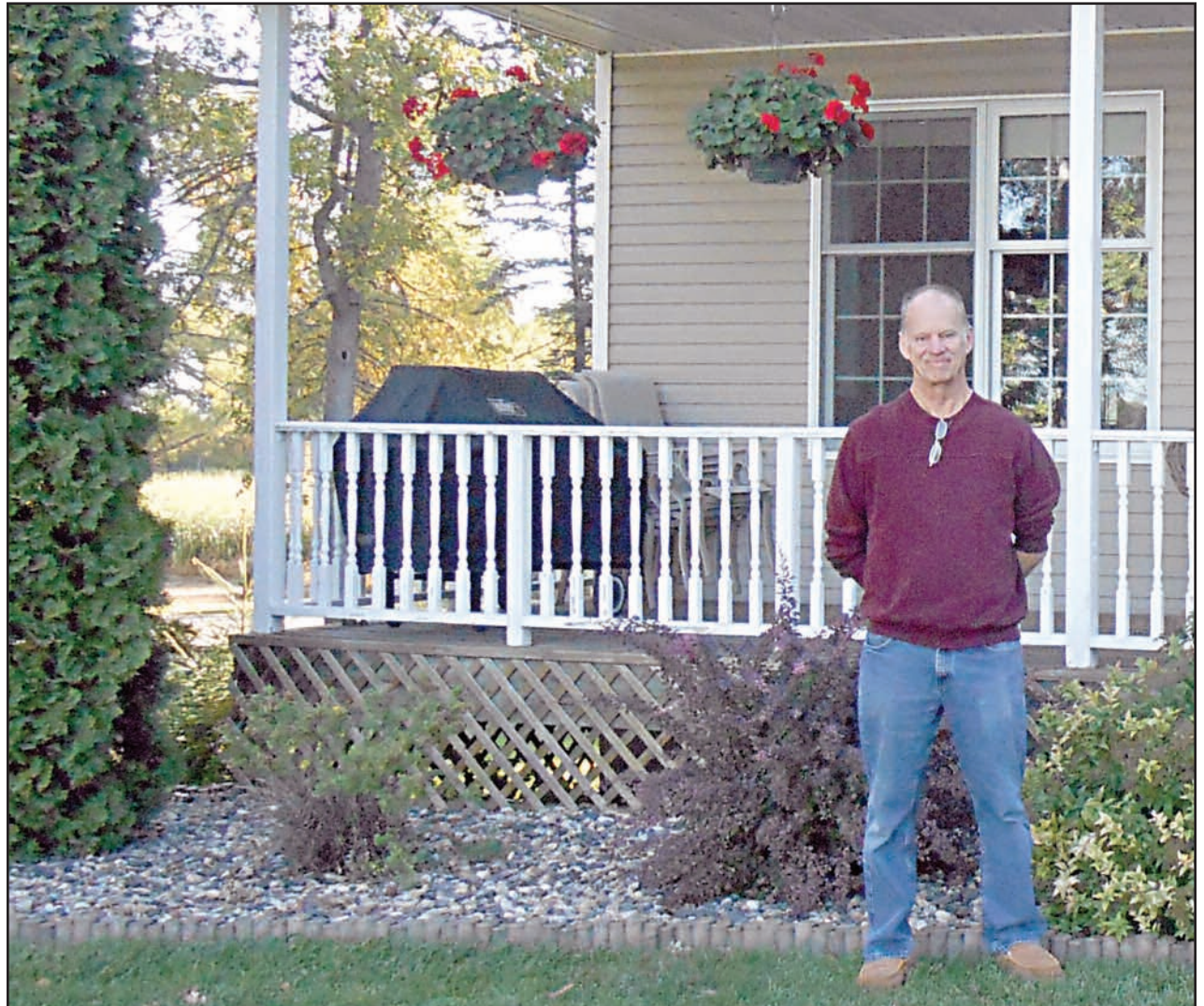
Al generally keeps busy 3-4 days a week, with Saturday being his biggest day. Saturday is when people are home, so he can get their new dish and satellite systems installed.

Today, people have a choice of installing Satellite or Dish systems, subscribing to cable, or putting up an antenna to watch television programs. Al said, once you have paid for your antenna and get it installed, you have no monthly charges, but you are limited to the number of programs you can receive.

People in the area, especially the farmers, are kept busy spring and fall, and don't have a great deal of free time to watch television. But when it turns cold and they're cooped up inside, people enjoy having a satellite or dish system.

Al lived in the Spring Valley area until fourth grade, then his family moved to Stewartville, where he graduated from high school in 1970. After graduation he studied electronics at a two-year vocational school in Rochester, and then spent two years in the Army. He did his basic training at Fort Knox, then moved on to Fort Gordon, Ga., then spent four months in Thailand, at a backup station for communications during the war in Vietnam. He was then sent to Fort Huachuca, Ariz. for a year.

After the service Al moved back home and started doing TV service work in the Spring Valley area. He has always been mechanically inclined, he says, and he has found that after two years of electronics school and what he learned in the Army, he has been able to keep up with many of the changes that have been



AL GRABAU of Al's Dish & Satellite Sales looks happy outside his beautiful St. Olaf lake home, because he's already at the office.

Star Eagle photo by Kathy Paulsen

made in the electronics field.

Al married Brenda Bliefus of Stewartville in 1975, and he and Brenda bought their first home, which cost them \$8,000, in Ostrander.

In 1980 he started working in sales in Spring Valley, and in 1983 he started Al's TV and Appliance in Spring Valley.

Cable had become available to people in the mid '80s, and satellite services started in 1995 and early 1996.

In 1997 "Dish" got its start and Al got involved with selling and installing dish systems, as well as doing upgrades, and he has been kept busy ever since.

As far as making repairs to the older units, Al reports most generally the cost of parts is more than the units are worth.

In 2000 he started working part time at Sorenson's Appliance in Geneva, and continued there for about 5 years, but he eventually found he was able to keep busy enough with his own customers.

Al typically puts on about 2,000 miles a month doing installations and service calls, and he still only charges about \$20 to \$25 for a service call.

Grabau continued on 3

Star Eagle Fall Home & Car Care Special

Thursday, October 17, 2013

Reed Waller, Editor • **Tracie Rosacker**, Advertising Manager



AL'S DISH & SATELLITE SALES is always ready to go where the business is, to get people hooked up to Dish.

Star Eagle photo by Kathy Paulsen

■ Grabau

from Page 2

"If you take care of your customers, you don't need to do a lot of other advertising."

His work, though, does have its occasional hazards.

"On two occasions I became stranded on rooftops when my ladder tipped over. One time I was fortunate enough to reach Rick Schultz by cell phone, and Rick came over and got my ladder stood back up again."

Al had a friend in Spring Valley who owned a lot on St. Olaf Lake he wanted to sell. Once Al saw the sandy shore and view of St. Olaf Lake, something told him it was where he was supposed to be. He purchased the property, moved a motor home out to it, and spent summers there until he could get something built.

Al later built a permanent home on St. Olaf Lake, with the help of Duane Swenson of New Richland. Swenson got the structure up, and Al did much of the electrical, plumbing and heating installations himself. Once the home was completed, Al and Brenda sold their home in Ostrander, as well as the

business in Spring Valley, and were able to move to the lake. Al later built a garage and shop area, and hung cedar on the walls in the enclosed porch, where he is able to sit and look out at the lake.

Al and Brenda had three children, Alisa, Amanda and Jakin, who went on to give them four grandchildren. Alisa is married and lives in Plymouth with her husband, and they have three children, Alex, Olivia and Konner. Amanda and her daughter, Amelia, live in Gainesville, Fla., and Al tries to visit them once a year, usually in February and March, when it is cold here in Minnesota. Jakin lives in Wakasaw, Wisc., and Al is able to see him from time to time too.

Al's wife, Brenda, passed away on Nov. 27, 2011 of cancer. Al has a friend he spends time with. She was married to his best friend, who has also passed away.

Al said, "When you are doing what you enjoy doing, and know what it is all about, you can't ask for a great deal more."

But the lakeshore scenery does help.

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Five signs you need to insulate your home this winter

(StatePoint) The average family spends more than \$1000 annually -- nearly half a home's total energy bill -- on heating and cooling costs, according to the U.S. government's Energy Star program. Unfortunately, a large portion of those expenses are wasted due to poor home insulation.

Homeowners prepping for winter can stop the energy waste cycle by taking a closer look at their insulation. As one of the fastest and most cost-efficient ways to reduce energy waste and lower bills, insulation traps warm air inside a home's walls -- similar to how a fleece sweater does for the body -- to regulate a home's temperature. But how do you know if your home is properly insulated?

"Fortunately, there are telltale signs that can alert any homeowner that it's time to add to or replace their home's insulation -- before the temperature plunges and the energy bill rises," says Mike Benetti, segment manager at Roxul, a leading manufacturer of stone wool insulation.

The experts at Roxul advise any

homeowner with a do-it-yourself mentality to run through the following checklist to determine whether their home has adequate insulation:

- **Vintage home:** Prior to consistent building codes, most homes built before 1980 were not insulated. If your home has no materials trapping heat, energy conservation is an uphill battle. Walls, ceilings and floors are the most important areas to add insulation for an immediate, positive impact on a home's energy usage and bills.

- **Non-stop furnace:** Does your furnace seem to run non-stop in the winter? Adequate insulation leads to less maintenance on your heating system, as it lasts longer, runs less and will require less maintenance for long-term cost savings.

- **Temperature inconsistency:** If you feel cold spots coming from the walls or attic, or one room of your home is drafty and another one warm, you may need to beef up your insulation. The fireplace, walls and attic are prime spots for drafts. Look for insulation that can fit snugly in



Are you in for a cold surprise this winter? Try this insulation checklist.

rafters and other tight areas. For example, Roxul ComfortBatt insulation made from recycled stone, can

be cut with a serrated blade for an exact fit.

- **Roof hot spots:** If your shingles are exposed after a recent snowfall, chances are these "hot spots" are indicative of warm air escaping. Check your attic for adequate insulation. If you can easily see your floor joists, you should add more. Use insulation, such as stone wool, that won't sag or lose density over time.

- **Mold Growth:** Mold in the corners of ceilings could mean your current insulation slumps and holds moisture. If this occurs, it's time to replace your insulation with one that does not store or transfer moisture and is completely resistant to mold, mildew, rot and bacterial growth, such as Roxul ComfortBatt.

More information about properly insulating your home can be found at www.Roxul.com.

Don't let cool weather take you by surprise. With proper insulation, you can improve the comfort of your home significantly and enjoy energy savings.

Tips on getting your car or truck tailgate-ready

(StatePoint) For many sports fans "tailgate" is their favorite word of the season -- a time to party-hearty in the great outdoors, or at least in a huge stadium parking lot.

Not surprisingly, tailgating has evolved over the years.

If there's a baseball game or NASCAR race, someone's next to his car, truck, van, SUV or even RV, performing tailgate rituals -- like grillin', chillin', drinkin' and watchin' TV. Non-sports fans have embraced tailgating too, taking the fun to concerts, camping and other outdoor get-togethers.

"Tailgating used to be a pickup truck and keg of beer. Now it's an art form," says Peter MacGillivray, vice president of events and communication for the Specialty Equipment Market Association, a 50-year-old automotive trade organization with 6,500-plus member companies.

The emphasis is on the car or truck, says MacGillivray, because that's where the tailgating fun begins. "Tailgating really highlights the way you can personalize and enhance your vehicle to fit one's interests. Thanks to manufacturing innovations, today's tailgaters have a vast array of cool, clever products to turn

their vehicles into party headquarters."

If you're using your vehicle for merry-making, you may be feeling the pressure to toss a crowd-pleasing bash. To get your rollicking party started, MacGillivray is offering ideas for turning your vehicle into party headquarters:

- **Get in bed:** Keep the bed area of your truck protected and stylish, with colorful spray-on bed liners, complete bolt-on bed liners, a rubber bed floor or tailgate mats. A specially made tent can fit over the truck bed.

- **Tailgate tales:** There are various ladders, ramps and stairs to improve access. Tailgate caps protect the tailgate and enhance the appearance of your vehicle. And for sheer comfort, a tailgate couch can convert any full-sized truck tailgate into a haven for couch potatoes.

- **Team player:** It's not hard to show your allegiances. Look for vinyl team graphics that adhere to the sides of your vehicle. Use wheel covers, floor mats and dash covers adorned with your team logo. Is someone lost? Help friends find your party with personalized car flags.

- **There's a hitch:** Lots of cool products are available that attach to your tow hitch, including fold-out tailgating tables and TV mounts. Dual-hitch receivers



Tailgating today can be made even more fun with a number of useful party accessories.

double your towing capacity so you can bring more tailgating accessories.

- **Food service:** Don't let the lack of fridge impede your grub situation. Use wheel well storage units and ice chests to hold beverages. For stability, use beverage holders that plant in the ground. For mobility, opt for a cargo cooler organizer on a trolley.

- **Game on:** Flat screen TVs and sound systems designed for cars and trucks are ideal for tailgating. Plus, portable satel-

lite receivers and antennas offer 'like-home' reception. Barring these set ups, mobile electronics work great too.

- **The great outdoors:** Pop-up auto umbrellas, shelters and awnings can fend off rain or too much sunshine. Use portable walls for a little privacy.

For more ideas on spiffing up your vehicle for tailgating, visit your local camping, sporting goods or auto parts store for inspiration, or visit www.EnjoyTheDrive.com.

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It all started on the family farm

Father and son construction company Braaten Builders does it all

By KATHY PAULSEN
Staff Writer

Time flies when you're busy – and Barry Braaten has been busy.

It's been almost 30 years this fall since he started working from his home, just south and east of Beaver Lake, in Steele County.

In 1983 Braaten married Jane Jensen, daughter of Norrine and Ed Jensen. He moved from Blooming Prairie to Beaver Lake to live on the farm that was a part of his wife's family history. The buildings were old and in need of either demolition, repair, or renovation, but Braaten proved up to the task.

Those first few years were a challenge, with Braaten driving every day to the Twin Cities, working as a journeyman carpenter there until he was able to acquire enough work locally. In his spare time, he made a lot of improvements to the old farm site, changing it into not only a magnificent home but an ideal business location.

Braaten Builders began at its current location in New Richland in 1990. Braaten builds single-family homes, garages, cabins, portable storage buildings and additions, as well as decks and stairs.

He expanded his business to include those "little things" that make living easier – such as permanent siding, windows, doors, roofing, seamless aluminum gutters with helmets, and seamless steel siding and roofing for new and old buildings. He also specializes in pole buildings.

There are two Braaten builders – Barry and his son Andy – who work together with pride to produce high quality workmanship



READY TO GO – Barry Braaten is ready to go out and do the big things and the little things to make it work for his customers.
Star Eagle photo by Kathy Paulsen

that require none of the "callback problems" often associated with larger companies. Companies with large crews often overlook the smaller jobs that also need to be done for their customers. The Braatens' thoroughness is a big plus for the local communities.

And another thing: they can boast the highest rating on "Angie's List!"

The Braatens take pride in what they do to help people who need work done, with the variety of quality services they offer. The Braatens are kept busy year round helping to keep homes and farms looking good and in good

operating condition.

When Braaten isn't busy swinging the hammer, he enjoys being with his family – his wife, Jane, and their son Andrew (Andy) who works with him, and daughter Alysa.

Andy graduated from NRHEG in 2004 and later from WyoTech automotive college. The knowledge Andy gained from WyoTech is used to keep the equipment they use in good working order.

Andy married Lindsey Anderson of Hartland in 2010, and they are the proud parents of son Blake, who will be celebrating his first birthday this month.

Alysa graduated from NRHEG in 2008, then attended Mankato State University, graduating from MSU in 2012. She now resides in St. Louis Park.

Braaten enjoys spending his free time at Beaver Lake, which is just down the road from where he lives, and cruising the Mississippi River a few times a year.

Braaten Builders can be found at 14375 SW 72nd Avenue, New Richland. For more information, visit their website, braaten-builders.com.

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Five tips for haunting your house this Halloween

(StatePoint) Americans spent close to \$8 billion on Halloween last year, according to the National Retail Federation. With scary celebrations getting bigger every year, becoming the best-decorated house on the block may seem difficult -- but it's easy if you have insider tips and tricks.

"Giving your home a spooky look for Halloween can make or break your trick-or-treaters' night," says Larry Kirchner, publisher of Hauntworld.com and owner and operator of the world's number-one rated haunted house, "The Darkness."

Kirchner, who has been building and operating Halloween amusement attractions for 25 years, has some tips for turning your home into a spooky haunted house:

- **Create a cemetery:** "Haunting" your yard sets the tone for your whole haunted house. One of the easiest, most fun, yet eeriest things you can do is turn the space into a graveyard. Let your grass grow long, add a gothic fence and a zombie or two popping up through the ground and make your own tombstone or coffin to complete the look.

Start by getting pink or blue foam from the hardware store. Cut the foam into the shape of a tombstone and then coat it with light plaster, thin concrete or other textured material found at the hardware or art supply store. Finally, paint it gray, and use a hotwire knife to carve in RIP and a name.

To make a coffin, use 1x6 pine boards and 2x2s nailed together into a box. Paint the outside and then get creative with your theme. For a Victorian vampire style coffin, line the interior with velvet curtains. For a deserted Old West theme, use jute or burlap on the inside.

- **Spin cobwebs:** Achieve that old, aban-



Spooky accents set the mood for Halloween.

PHOTO © Ondreicka - Fotolia.com

doned, dusty look inside, or create creepiness outside, by spinning your own cobwebs. Most haunted house supply websites sell cobweb glue guns that use air to spray thin strands of glue. You can create any size cobweb over fake birds, china cabinets or even trees.

- **Creepify your windows:** Add a red light to the bottom of the windows, and hang torn black curtains to make the windows look creepy when they're lit. Hang boards across the outside to give the house an abandoned look.

- **Add eerie effects:** Play spooky sounds on a stereo outside or through open windows. You can find great Halloween soundtracks online. For a dramatic effect, use a fog

machine to make the house look otherworldly. You can rent or purchase fog machines at most party stores.

- **Break out some black birds:** Dollar stores often sell black birds, which you can make frightening by gluing scraps of gray fabric to their feathers and buttons over their eyes. Hang them in the yard or throughout the house with black gauze or spider webs from the party store.

This Halloween, get spookily creative. Go beyond a simple Jack-O-Lantern and haunt your whole house.

For more inspiration on Halloween decorations or haunted houses, visit www.HauntWorld.com.

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Tips to cut home utility bills and improve efficiency

(StatePoint) Having trouble keeping your home comfortable year-round? You're not alone. The average mid-size U.S. home has a staggering half mile of gaps and cracks that outside air, including dust and allergens, can infiltrate and that inside, conditioned air can leak out of, according to the Air Barrier Association of America.

Just as you wouldn't want to leave a window open in winter or summer, you don't want to let gaps and small holes around windows, doors, plumbing penetrations and electrical outlets go unaddressed.

By doing some straightforward air sealing and insulating projects around the home, homeowners can typically save up to 30 percent on home energy costs, according to the Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET). Even if you're not that handy, you're in luck. Sealing your home is as simple as knowing your 1,2,3's and ABC's.

All you need to get started is:

- **One sealant:** An inexpensive product can do the trick. Opt for a versatile sealant, such as Great Stuff Insulating Foam Sealant, to tackle a series of sealing projects around the home.

- **Two Hours:** It only takes a couple of hours to seal all those gaps and cracks that cause drafts in your home. Doing so will permanently increase



An inexpensive foam sealant may be all you need to deal with annoying little drafts in your home.

the comfort, performance and energy-efficiency of your house. For a complete home sealing project checklist, visit www.GreatStuff.dow.com/pdfs/checklist.pdf.

- **Three Locations:** Three key locations will be impacted the most by air sealing projects -- the attic, basement and central living space.

So where should you start looking? An easy trick to remember is the ABC's of air sealing:

- **A is for Attic:** The attic is one of the main places in the home you're likely to lose heat. So

in addition to adding insulation, seal around the attic door to help keep air from escaping. You'll keep heat inside your living space and make your family comfortable year-round by sealing the attic tightly to prevent drafts.

- **B is for Basement:** It's damp, dark and cold, and often one of the largest air leakage culprits in the home. It's also the most accessible, making it an excellent place to start sealing to prevent cooler air from seeping into the rest of your house.

- **C is for Central Living Areas:** Don't neglect the most trafficked areas of your house where you eat, sleep, watch TV and hang out. Fill the gaps and cracks in your living spaces -- including around electrical outlets and plumbing penetrations -- to prevent drafts throughout the year that directly impact the comfort of the home.

By sealing plumbing penetrations with sealants like Great Stuff Insulating Foam Sealants, homeowners can begin to see financial returns after less than half a month, saving \$45 annually, according to a recent study conducted by Dow Building Solutions and DR Nelson & Associates.

By following easy steps to seal your home, you can put a little extra spending money in your pocket and increase the overall comfort, performance and energy efficiency of your home.

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Smart home improvements can save you money

(StatePoint) During fall, many homeowners focus on small upgrades and improvements. The turning season is the perfect time to find and correct potential compromises in your home before they become larger, and more costly, renovation issues.

"Whether it is routine home exterior checks or appliances purchases, there are many ways homeowners can conduct basic, inexpensive home maintenance," said Harold "Bud" Dietrich, member of the American Institute of Architects Custom Residential Architecture Network.

DIY Home Inspection

Many people don't know that they should perform twice-a-year home inspections. The prime time for these inspections is in the spring and fall. Take the time to give your house a thorough review.

Start by walking the perimeter of your property to see if there is any rotting wood, mold, loose gutters or shingles. Then check for any cracks that have settled or work that could be done to siding, roofing or windows.

Inspect the bathroom and kitchen for loose or missing tiles and leaks in sinks and faucets. Ensure that appliances are working at maximum capacity.

Although these may not seem like major issues, it is much easier to tackle them during milder seasons so potential problems aren't made worse by extreme weather.

Exterior Updates

Many people underestimate the seriousness of dirt and mulch covering the siding of a home. Most building codes actually require at least six inches of the foundation to be exposed.

Beyond breaking these codes, dirt and mulch build-up pulls moisture from the ground and causes it to develop in the walls. Eventually mold will start to grow, which can lead to a variety of indoor air quality and structural problems. Raking around the foundation of your home regularly can help combat this problem.

Another area to consider for easy updates is exterior paint. Peeling paint



Fall is the time to review your home for small improvements.

isn't only unattractive; it also exposes the siding of your home to the elements. Regular maintenance of areas that need re-painting can save major headaches down the line.

Updating Appliances

Buying new appliances can be an

investment, and, as such, paying a higher price upfront can actually save you money in the long run. The right appliances can last for twenty years or more, while more inexpensive models often break down after a few years. Newer models are also often more energy efficient. If cost or budget is an issue, store display models are often offered at extremely discounted prices.

Also make an investment in flooring and countertops. Buying laminate countertops will initially be cheaper than granite countertops, but in ten years the granite countertops will still look brand new, while the laminate will be worn out and need to be replaced.

An architect can help homeowners apply many of these cost-saving home improvements in smart and strategic ways. To find one in your area, visit: <http://architectfinder.aia.org/>.

Don't wait. Fall is the ideal time to make small improvements that will save you money and time later on.

Stay safe when completing home improvement projects

(StatePoint) Finally fixing that loose step? Planning to use power tools? Doing your own home repairs and projects can feel empowering, but if done improperly, it can be dangerous too.

Last year, one-third of DIYers reported injuries while working on a home improvement project, yet 77 percent admit they've skipped wearing the proper protective gear.

"Whatever your experience level, you need to use caution when making repairs or doing general home maintenance," says Lou Manfredini, host of HouseSmarts TV and home improvement contributor on NBC's 'The Today Show.'

Here are some tips from Manfredini to ensure you are safe when completing common DIY tasks.

• **Updating the front door:** Want to add some pizzazz to your home? Consider repainting the front door. With a little sanding, priming and a new coat of paint in a bold color, you can change the entire look of your home. Just make sure you wear a proper respirator while sanding, and use appropriate protective eyewear.

• **Mowing the lawn:** Before mowing, take time to inspect for items lying on the ground. Sticks and stones can break your bones -- particularly if the blade of the

mower picks it up and throws it at high speed from under the mower's deck. When doing yard work outside, help protect your eyes with safety eyewear like ForceFlex MAX Flexible Safety Eyewear.

• **Easy bathroom fix:** Replacing a broken ceramic tile is easy if you follow these steps. Remove all the grout around the tile. Then use a chisel to remove the tile. Consider wearing proper safety eyewear. Clean up the surface and then install the new tile with tile adhesive. When that dries, re-grout the new tile. When tackling this project, make sure you wear a good pair of gloves, as broken tile pieces can be sharp.

• **Fixing up furniture:** Refinishing furniture is a great way to revive old items. But remember, some finishing products may be harmful to lungs and skin. Always read the safety information for the products used. Wear a good pair of quality painter's gloves, protective eyewear, and an appropriate respirator.

• **Using power tools:** Anytime you use power tools like a circular saw, sander or a compressor, you should protect your ears. Disposable foam ear plugs, such as those from 3M TEKK Protection brand, are easy to use and can help reduce the noise level, which is important, as noises



When using power tools, remember to protect yourself with ear plugs, dust mask, and protective eyewear.

over 85 decibels can lead to permanent hearing loss over time. Also consider safety protective eyewear when using circular saws, sanders and other power tools.

• **Adding Insulation:** Adding insulation to your home is one of the best ways to increase its energy efficiency. Whether its fiberglass batt insulation or blown-in cellulose, the added comfort will be apparent. For safety, wear pants, a long sleeve

shirt and eye, hand, and lung protection, such as the 3M TEKK Protection Sanding and Fiberglass Valved Respirator.

More DIY safety tips and project information can be found at www.3MDIY.com.

When it comes to your health and safety, don't take chances. Doing it right means doing it safely.



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