TFC Recycling

From humble beginnings, this Chesapeake-based, family-owned business is now the largest recycler in Virginia

Michael “Recycle” Benedetto, President and Owner of TFC Recycling
According to the Declaration of Independence, governments “derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.” This means if people don’t like their government, they have the right to change it. Here in the U.S.A., the vehicle of that change is the vote. Though change often comes too slowly for many, it wouldn’t come at all if every adult U.S. citizen didn’t have—and exercise—this foundational right.

National Voter Registration Day, on September 20th, is an all-out effort to convince all American citizens of voting age to exercise that right and, if they haven’t yet registered to vote, to do so. Volunteers and organizations nationwide collaborate by setting up registration tables, knocking on doors, or producing social and mass media awareness campaigns on the importance of registering to vote. Imagine over 10,000 volunteers working together one full day to educate Americans on one of our most precious rights. On National Voter Registration Day 2016, over 750,000 American citizens registered to exercise a fundamental right that is denied to millions of people in other nations.

National Voter Registration Day is also a reminder of what is required to vote. You must be at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, and a current resident of your state. When you see a National Voter Registration Day table or volunteer, you can do more than just register. You can also confirm your polling place, update your registration details, or get more information on upcoming elections.

— Rob Lauer
Inflation Risks for Retirees

Inflation is back and worse than it’s been in decades. Consumer prices have risen 9.1 percent in the last year. Depending on your income, the amount you drive, and how you shop, that increase may feel even higher. Gasoline prices in Virginia have doubled in the last two years. Used car prices are up over 20 percent. A trip to the grocery store has turned wise shoppers into coupon clippers. Vacation plans are being changed or canceled.

Inflation is a real problem for middle-class working people. Wages have lagged behind inflation. Retirees are also feeling the pinch. Corporate pensions are not usually indexed for inflation. Bank deposits pay almost nothing, and even inflation-adjusted pensions and Social Security don’t adjust as much as the real increase in the cost of living.

People retiring in their sixties should plan for thirty to forty years of retirement. A lot can happen during that time to upset your plans.

Decisions you make as you prepare to retire will determine how much inflation will impact your lifestyle as you get older. A good retirement plan can provide an early warning of inflation risk. A five percent inflation rate means that the cost of living will double every 14 years. That guaranteed annuity that appears to be no risk today may not provide the actual income that you’ll need to live comfortably a decade or two down the road.

People retiring in their sixties should plan for thirty to forty years of retirement. A lot can happen during that time to upset your plans. Lower than expected rates of return, major drops in the stock market, cuts in pension or social security income, and long-term care expenses are just some of the things that should be considered. As we strain our budget to fill our gas tank, higher than normal inflation rates should also be considered, especially in times like this.

Retirement planning is our specialty. A good retirement plan identifies where your greatest risks lie. If you don’t know where they are, you can’t afford to retire without one. Give us a call to ask about retirement planning today.

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The 13th Annual Mayor’s Breakfast to Honor Veterans

The Fall Equinox. The word “equinox” comes from two Latin terms: *aequus*, which means equal, and *nox*, which means night. So equinox literally means “equal night.” According to the National Weather Service, an equinox occurs two times each year when the number of daylight hours and nighttime hours in a single day is equal. This happens because the Earth’s axis is tilted neither toward nor away from the sun. Because the sun is over the equator on those two days, the amount of daylight and darkness is the same across the entire Earth.

The Spring Equinox usually takes place between March 20th and 21st. The Fall Equinox usually takes place between September 22nd and 23rd.

This year (2022), fall begins officially on Thursday, September 22nd. If one wants to get even more precise, in our region of the eastern seaboard, fall begins that evening at 9:02 p.m.

- Rob Lauer

Spotlight on the 2023/2024 VHSL Realignment

Most people know that high school athletics in Virginia are sanctioned by the Virginia High School League (VHSL). What is not well-known is how schools are grouped and that every three to four years, the VHSL realigns schools, thus changing regional and state level opponents in the Commonwealth’s high schools. The next realignment is set to take place in the 2023-2024 athletic season, running through the 2027 season. The Alignment Committee’s recently-submitted proposal will impact several of our local schools, and it can get complicated, but we have you covered with all you need to know!

First, it is important to understand how schools are sectioned. There are districts, regions, and classes. Districts—the smallest of the entities—are given names along with common opponents that comprise a school’s district schedule. Examples of local districts in our area are the Southeastern District (Great Bridge, Grassfield, Hickory, etc.), the Beach District (Kellam, Ocean Lakes, Princess Anne, etc.), and the Eastern District (Churchland, Lake Taylor, Maury, etc.).

Next are the regions, which contain schools from all districts but are still geographically ordered. Regions are assigned by letter, either A, B, C, or D. Our local schools are Region A.

Lastly, and most importantly, there are classes, which are numbered 1 through 6. Classes group schools based on Average Daily Membership (ADM), aka enrollment. The theory behind grouping based on enrollment is that schools with large student bodies have more student-athletes to pull from, thus increasing their chances of having better athletes. This prevents a school like Lake Taylor, which has an ADM of 788, from having to go through schools like Grassfield (ADM of 1,700) for a regional or state title. My opinion is that classes are vital to ensuring competitive fairness at the regional and state levels of post-season play.

The current proposal on the table would impact six of our local schools: Kellam, Ocean Lakes, Deep Creek, Great Bridge, Hickory, and King’s Fork.

Below are two charts: one with the current class based on the 2018 realignment with ADM and one with the proposed class after realignment and the current ADM.

Send all nominations for local athletes to spotlight@sportswithbj@gmail.com

A 2007 Great Bridge High School graduate, Brandon Johnson is a freelance writer and podcaster, a baseball and basketball coach, and works at Centerville Insurance Agency.
I am a Storyteller!

I have been a storyteller for as long as I can remember. And it fits into what I do with our magazines. Actually, if we stop to ponder what kind of information we want to impart, there are many choices.

“Just the facts” is one objective in communication. “The Truth and nothing but the Truth” reaches for more information. Then, my desire for “color” fits in at length.

I always want to share the “color.” For instance, when we write stories about our clients and neighbors, my goal is to leave our readers with as pertinent a description as possible.

Here is as good an example as comes to my mind: Jon Pittman is the owner of the Moyock Farm Market. I could communicate just that to you very quickly. But I think your picture of who this man is becomes more full when I write that Jon is following in his grandfather’s footsteps. Even more of the picture develops when I add that Jon is a part-time deputy sheriff married to a beautiful soul, Jamie, and they have a son and daughter.

Knowing who someone is, and not just what they do, gives us more information about whom we trust in our business dealings, our homes, and even our lives.

Knowing who someone is, and not just what they do, gives us more information about whom we trust in our business dealings, our homes, and even our lives.

There is even more to consider than good business dealings. Sometimes, even often, we form friendships with those who appear in our lives. Doctor Brian Midgette entered my life in 1989 and became a man I admired. Midgette Family Dentistry in Western Branch is one practice I have always been proud to share with our readers. The Edinburgh Dentistry group I go to on this eastern side of Chesapeake also projects a long-time, friendly feeling.

I want my magazines to be personal enough to give readers a true and accurate picture of who our clients are. By now, Barry Hobbs of Addition Associates is someone I have been proud to introduce to our readers for twenty-five years. Barry is a true gentleman and calls me “Dear Heart.” I have always loved that compliment. One of his happy clients told me years ago, “We were so sorry when his men finished our kitchen job! We missed them coming every morning!” WOW!

Have you ever heard, “The proof of the pudding is in the details?” I believe in that concept. Telling too much information can be boring and time-consuming, but all relevant information should be shared. I am in the information business and believe it is in your best interest for me to share it.

Shopper reader, meet Shopper client. Neighbors like to do business with neighbors!

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Lori Granger has returned to The Shopper. After living in Rhode Island, Lori has returned to Southside Hampton Roads and The Shopper.
Lori is an outstanding Account Executive who truly loves working with Entrepreneurs to promote their businesses. And they are delighted to have her back!

Welcome back
Lori Granger

Friends can welcome Lori back to The Shopper where she can be contacted at 757-547-0520 or receive email at lorigranger@gmail.com
Recently, I’ve become addicted to the Home and Garden Channel. It’s a harmless addiction but not one of which I’m particularly proud. When winding down at night, reading a good book or watching some highly-acclaimed dramatic series seems like a better use of time. But lately, I can’t get enough of TV series featuring ordinary people either looking for “the house of their dreams” or having their current abode made over into said dreamhouse. The make-over shows appeal to my creative side, but I’m also intrigued by the home-buyers featured on series like “House Hunters.”

For those who don’t share my addiction, each episode of “House Hunters” features a couple searching for a new home in a particular city or town. Usually, they’re moving there because they’re starting a new job or retiring from an old one. The couple is paired with a real estate agent to whom they reveal the type of house they’re looking for and how much they’re willing to spend for it.

What some of these people think they can get for the money they’re willing to spend is the stuff of great comedy—or tragedy, take your pick. I mean, who actually believes that for $1,200 a month, they can get a three-bedroom/two-bath rental with a balcony within walking distance of the trendiest restaurants and shops in a major U.S. urban center? Before I became an addict, I would have said no one over the age of 12. But since my addiction, I’ve learned that such expectations are fairly common among Americans of all ages.

And speaking of Americans of all ages, what has fascinated me is how often these potential home buyers exhibit two particular mindsets.

Those with the first mindset, while wanting privacy when they close their front door, also want to walk out that door and be immersed in the community. If they decide not to cook dinner, they want to stroll down the street to a local restaurant. When walking the dog, they want to pass other dog-walkers, window-shop, or grab a cup of coffee. They like living in the heart of the action.

The second mindset is the exact opposite. Give these folks a McMansion on 40,000 acres in some uncharted wilderness. If they can’t have that, they’ll take a house in the suburbs as long as they can’t see or be seen by neighbors. Their ideal backyard wouldn’t face another yard; it would overlook a swath of forest that might bring to mind a magnificent National Park—or the abode of a serial killer from a slasher film.

If one mindset craves the adrenaline rush of constant social connection, the other craves life in a fortress of solitude. I wonder if these mindsets in the extreme have something to do with the divisiveness currently wracking our nation.

Of course, millions of us are somewhere between these two mindsets. We love feeling connected to others while valuing the necessity of time alone. In the end, it’s all about finding the proper balance.
National Family Health and Fitness Day, September 24th

National Family Health and Fitness Day, on the last Saturday of September, promotes families incorporating exercise and a healthy diet into their lifestyle.

Hereditry certainly influences a family’s health—with paternal genes having a more dominant effect than maternal genes. But a family’s shared habits have as profound an effect on their health as their shared genes. Families tend to eat the same types of foods, in the same amounts, at the same frequency. They also tend to share the same patterns of physical activity or inactivity. All of which points to an uncomfortable truth: our best efforts to break unhealthy habits can be unintentionally undermined by the very people who love us the most.

Thankfully, Family Health and Fitness Day USA promotes families prioritizing healthy living together.

Healthy living is the practice of making choices and doing activities that promote physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. As simple and straightforward as that may seem, it has not been the norm for most families throughout history.

Before the 1700s, the health threat facing most families was epidemic disease, such as plague, cholera, and smallpox. A family’s eating habits were usually the result of their social status. Wealthier families could afford tastier, healthier foods, while lower-class families survived on less healthy food in smaller portions.

The 1800s saw the birth of the one-dish meal. Most families weren’t wealthy, and cooking equipment was limited, so they often cooked meals in one stew for dinner. Nutrition wasn’t their main priority. Since many were working families, they cared about filling foods that gave them the high calories needed for physical labor.

In the early 1900s, most meals were prepared from whatever was available in a family’s garden, cellar, or icebox. The majority of Americans, still living in rural areas, might have to travel some distance to get to their “local” general store to buy canned goods. Americans living in towns and cities had easier access to such items but tended to buy most of their groceries from neighborhood vegetable stands and butcher shops. When the first fast-food chain, White Castle, was introduced in 1921, it changed the nation’s attitudes toward processed foods.

In the 1940s, the American Medical Association and the National Committee on Physical Fitness encouraged physical exercise and nutritious eating to improve the nation’s overall health. But it was an uphill climb, thanks to the rise of national fast-food chains, such as McDonald’s, in the mid-1950s. By the 1960s and 70s, convenience trumped nutrition at mealtime. As the average American’s weight and waistline increased, the American lifestyle became less physically active and more sedentary—resulting in a rise in high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, and other life-threatening conditions.

In 1996, the Health and Information Resource Center created Family Health and Fitness Day USA, understanding that when families strive to be healthy together, their success rate increases. Incorporating exercise and a healthy diet into a family’s lifestyle is a team effort. It’s kind of like celebrations. Who celebrates alone?

~ Rob Lauer
Labor Day is now behind us, and so is the summer. Though fall doesn’t officially begin until September 22, and although Hampton Roads temperatures are likely to remain in the 70s well into October, the weather in the minds of most, Labor Day marks the end of summer. It’s time to bid a fond farewell to vacations, summer sports, cookouts, and pool parties. And, of course, everyone must stop wearing all white clothing until after Memorial Day 2023.

Really? Who says?
For over a century, the one “Fashion Rule” that nearly everyone knew was “Don’t wear white after Labor Day.” Where in the world did this idea come from, and do modern-day clothing designers and fashionistas agree with it?

The tradition of wearing white during the summer dates back to the late 1800s, before the advent of air-conditioning, ceiling fans, and electricity. It was also an age of modesty: floor-length dresses for women, along with high collars and long sleeves for everyone, male and female. It was a more formal time when everyone always dressed in layers regardless of the season. Men typically wore some sort of tie around their necks, along with vests and jackets whether they were wealthy gentlemen of leisure or working-class day laborers. Even farmhands working in fields wore vests and neckerchiefs. (Think of Western films and consider the layers of clothes worn by cowboys riding on the range.)

If one’s body was always covered up in layers of clothing, it made sense to wear clothes made from lightweight fabrics (like cotton) in hot weather. White-colored fabrics reflect sunlight instead of absorbing it like dark-colored materials, so white became the color of choice for summer wear.

Of course, most Americans lived in rural farming communities until 1920, and farm families seldom had the money to buy white, lightweight clothes that could only be worn one out of four seasons. In the 1800s, cotton was expensive, no matter where one lived in the world—not to mention it wrinkled quickly and required more upkeep. Most Americans—working on farms and in urban factories or running their own shops and small businesses—simply didn’t have the time to care for such clothing.

This was not the case for the small but steadily growing American upper class. After the Civil War, with the advent of national railroad lines, the oil industry, electricity, and indoor plumbing, the quality of life for Americans with money improved significantly. The so-called Gilded Age in the late 1800s saw the rise of the modern American Upper Class who not only had unprecedented wealth but also a commodity that the vast majority of human beings since the beginning of recorded history had never enjoyed—leisure time.

These fortunate few had the means and the time to travel, not out of necessity but for fun, giving birth to something that most Americans now enjoy—vacations. During the summer, wealthy Americans left their homes in the nation’s crowded, overheated urban centers or the sweltering Deep South for resort communities along New England’s beaches and the Upper Midwest’s Great Lakes. Here they could relax on beaches, enjoy boating, and play tennis or croquet. Styles at the time dictated outfits for each of these activities—layers of white, lightweight cottony fabrics that were fitted enough to look fashionable but loose enough to move freely in. And thus, informal sportswear was born. Though casual by the standards of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, those clothes were still extremely formal by today’s standards. Since these were the outfits that the rich wore to sweat in, the clothes required frequent washing and ironing. Because the rich could afford maids, butlers, and hired help to perform such menial tasks, sweating in their expensive white summer wear didn’t cause them too much of a sweat.

After Labor Day, when the wealthy left their resort communities and returned to their homes in America’s big cities, these summer whites were packed away until the following summer. Autumn brought inclement weather, and if one got caught in the rain while wearing summer whites, the lightweight material had a tendency to become somewhat transparent regardless of how many layers one wore. White clothing worn casually on a beach or tennis court could begin looking dingy and dirty rather quickly when worn on the streets of a city. And so, a tradition was born among the well-to-do: “Don’t wear white before Memorial Day or after Labor Day.”

Snobs of all classes gradually got wind of the tradition, and whether they were members of established affluent families or “new money,” they began enforcing it as a hard-and-fast rule. “It was the insiders trying to keep other people out,” according to Valerie Steele, director of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, “outsiders trying to climb in by playing by the rules.”

By the 1950s, the rule became universal among Americans of all classes—whether they bought their clothes on Fifth Avenue or through the Sears catalog. At the same time, the rule’s origin faded from memory.

There were some holdouts to the rule—most notably, the world-famous 20th-century fashion designer Coco Chanel, who proudly wore white any time of the year she wished. Does the rule still apply in 2022?

The answer from today’s leading fashion designers and style gurus is a resounding: “No!” Whether it’s a white pair of pants or a skirt, a shirt or blouse, jacket, vest, hat, boots or shoes—if you like it and think you look good in it, wear it regardless of the season.
The Shopper

October will feature some local election candidates

If you’re running for office in the upcoming local elections, then you obviously care about your city and have exciting ideas on how to improve life there for everyone. Why not introduce yourself to your fellow citizens and share your vision with them through a story in the upcoming October 2022 issue of The Shopper? For 42 years, readers across the Southside have been turning to our pages to read positive, uplifting and enlightening stories about local candidates. Contact us now to be a part of this special "Local Elections" issue!

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Michael Benedetto has fond memories of spending summers in Virginia Beach as a teenager during the late 1970s and early 1980s. “I’m originally from New York,” he explains. “But as soon as school ended each year, my parents, three siblings, and I came down to a small condo in Virginia Beach, and we didn’t head back to New York until school started in early September.” When Michael recalls those summers, one doesn’t hear about sand, surf, and lazy afternoons spent sunbathing or catching a wave. Instead, Michael and his siblings spent those summers working outside at the materials recovery facility for their family’s business, TFC Recycling, located in Chesapeake.

Founded in 1973, Tidewater Fibre Corp (now referred to as TFC Recycling) is now Virginia’s largest residential curbside recycler. Through partnerships and agreements with local and municipal governments and public service authorities, the company provides recycling services for over 600,000 households in six of Virginia’s largest cities and more than 4,000 commercial customers in Virginia and North Carolina. Headquartered in Chesapeake, TFC employs over 350 people and operates more than 180 collection and transfer vehicles.

“We’re a local, family-owned company that’s been doing the right thing for our employees, our community, and the environment for generations,” Michael says with a proud smile. Despite being Virginia’s largest residential curbside recycler, TFC Recycling had humble beginnings. “In the early years, we were operating the business out of a single-wide trailer,” Michael recalls. Before the technological advances of the 1980s, ’90s, and beyond, the business of recycling was a hands-on, laborious, time-consuming endeavor. Michael’s parents, Joseph and Susann Benedetto, required him to do the toughest, dirtiest jobs, learning the business from the ground up. But this family-owned business’s humble roots go back generations.

“My great-grandfather, Dominic Benedetto, came from Italy through Ellis Island and settled in Brooklyn in the late 1800s,” Michael explains. “At that time, bias against Italian immigrants limited his job opportunities. There’s an old saying: ‘One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.’ My great-grandfather took that to heart. He began collecting old clothes, scraps, and other items, and in 1897, he turned it into a business—one of the first buy-back centers and recycling companies in the U.S. My grandfather, Joseph Benedetto, Sr., born in 1900, continued the recycling business. He began a partnership with a papermill, supplying it with any materials that could be broken down and converted into paper. By the 1950s, he had grown the business into one of the largest recycling operations in the U.S.”

“In the early 1970s, my dad wanted to grow and modernize the company,” Michael continues, “but my grandfather, who had lived through the Great Depression and didn’t want to borrow money, wasn’t interested. So, my dad struck out on his own. Banks in Virginia were more friendly than those in New York, so my dad was able to get a $50,000 loan. In 1973, he opened his own business, Tidewater Fibre Corp., here in Chesapeake, and the loan allowed him to build a 20,000-square-foot building with a baler and conveyer belt. To this day, that building is still part of TFC’s operations.”

“We’re a local, family-owned company that’s been doing the right thing for our employees, our community, and the environment for generations.”

—Michael Benedetto

With TFC Recycling firmly established, the family moved permanently from New York to Hampton Roads. In the late 1970s, methods used to collect and sort recyclable material were still primitive by today’s standards. But the family was determined that TFC be at the forefront of progress and change. “In the early 1980s, we purchased our first roll-off truck, like the ones now used at building sites to collect debris,” Michael recalls. “We rented these containers to area department stores, and they’d throw their cardboard into them. The roll-off trucks allowed us to place recycling containers at churches and non-profits for fund-raising.”

In the 1980s, American attitudes toward recycling changed for the better thanks to one major newsworthy event. New York City had reached its landfill capacity and agreed to ship its garbage via a barge—the Mobro 4000—to a landfill in Morehead City, North Carolina. When rumors spread that the barge’s entire shipment had been contaminated by debris from a New York City hospital, Carolina’s environmental watchdogs demanded that the city certify the trash contained no toxic wastes or harmful materials. Unsatisfied with New York’s response, North Carolina officials obtained a court order prohibiting the Mobro from unloading anywhere in their state. States along the eastern seaboard followed suit, as did Mexico. Months later, the barge was finally allowed to anchor in New Jersey, and its cargo was incinerated. The incident—cited by environmentalists and the media as evidence of a landfill shortage—triggered
a national discussion about solid waste disposal, which evolved into mandatory recycling rates by the late 1980s. “Laws were enacted in Virginia that deemed landfills unsanitary,” Michael explains. “There was concern about contaminating water supplies. Virginia and other states issued recycling mandates. The Southeastern Public Service Authority—founded in 1973 to manage waste—started a pilot curbside recycling program in the late 1980s to meet Virginia’s 25 percent recycling mandate. Needing a home for recycling materials, the SPSA issued a request for proposals. We submitted the most qualified bid and got the contract.”

“Back then, small bins were used for residential recycling,” Michael says. “People would fill them, leave them outside, and SPSA trucks picked them up. The driver would hop out of the truck and personally sort through each bin, dividing the debris into six compartments, each designated for particular materials. Plastic bottle bins filled up quickly in the summers; the cardboard bins filled up quickly during the holidays. When a bin filled up, the driver had to drive the truck back to the facility and empty it before returning to his route to continue collecting. That process was expensive because it required so many trucks, drivers, and man-hours.”

“Recycling is good, and a city-wide curbside collection is the most efficient and effective way to do it.” —Michael Benedetto

Step by step, TFC made the process of collecting recyclables more efficient. “A shift began toward using trucks with only two compartments instead of six—one for paper, one for bottles and cans,” Michael explains. “Some trucks even came with dividers that could be moved to accommodate seasonal variations. Soon after, compaction was introduced, and the process became even more efficient.”

Another advance was the move to using larger collection carts in the 1990s. Michael is particularly proud of the partnership that TFC established at that time with the City of Virginia Beach. “Virginia Beach was a leader in recycling,” Michael says. “By partnering with them, we became the first company in the U.S. to collect and process recyclable materials, all mixed together, from 95-gallon carts with wheels and lids. Collection trucks with arms could pick up and empty these carts. We made a costly, inefficient recycling service more efficient by using technology from other industries to separate materials. Placing all recyclable materials together in a cart made it easier for residents to transport recyclables to the curb; it provided more capacity for more material to be recycled and a lid to keep material dry and from littering the neighborhood. It also limited the number of trucks and drivers because a household could be serviced in less than a minute, versus spending five-to-ten minutes per household. Recyclables could be sorted in our Materials Recovery Facility rather than by the drivers on the street.”

The program that TFC developed was so efficient that the company’s partnership with Virginia Beach served as a model for partnerships now used in over 250 cities nationwide. “We, along with the City of Virginia Beach, take some credit for inventing and perfecting the current single stream collection and separation process,” Michael smiles. TFC’s role as a leading innovator in recycling technology continued into the 21st century.

“In 2006, we installed the most expensive, automated recycling recovery system at that time in Chesapeake,” Michael says. “Recyclables were dumped from a truck onto a conveyor belt and loaded onto a conveyor belt. Materials traveled to a mechanical screen that sorted paper from glass, metal, and plastic bottles and cans by size and shape. Seven optical sorting units—actual cameras over conveyor belts that used infrared technology to sort by size, shape, and composition—were installed. This was the most state-of-the-art materials recovery system anywhere in the world. The optical sorting units assisted the mechanical screens in separating materials for recycling. Additionally, magnetic separators were installed to remove steel and aluminum cans. After materials were separated, they were baled for shipment to mills worldwide. From 1996 to today, hundreds of visitors from small to multinational companies and dozens of countries have come to see what we are doing and how we are doing it. Additionally, we offer tours to residential businesses so that materials are being captured and recycled. We taught the world the most efficient and effective way to collect and process recyclable waste—a technology and system used efficiently today.”

In 2011, TFC started “Recycling Perks,” an incentive program that promotes participation in curbside recycling and environmental stewardship. As residents recycle, they are awarded points that allow them to claim free rewards from local businesses participating in the program. “We really want to get people to recycle more material more often,” Michael says. “It’s a great win-win-win-win program: businesses get free advertising and door traffic, residents get free products and services, cities collect less waste, and TFC collects more recyclables.

In 2013, TFC became the first company in Virginia to install a compressed natural gas filling station. “There’s so much debate nationally about not supporting hostile foreign countries by continuing to buy fossil fuel from them,” Michael notes. “Compressed natural gas (CNG) is not a fossil fuel. It’s cleaner, doesn’t contribute to climate change, is produced in the U.S., and delivered by Virginia Natural Gas. It was refreshing to see cities and other companies following our lead and changing over to compressed natural gas.”

Concerned about the pace of climate change and how it will affect our children, Michael is nevertheless optimistic about steps that can be taken now and in the future. “Instead of cutting down a tree to make paper, we use recycled cardboard and paper to make new boxes,” he says. “We can mine aluminum, which pollutes the atmosphere and uses so much energy, or, on the other hand, we can simply recycle existing aluminum cans. Recycling is good, and a city-wide curbside collection is the most efficient and effective way to do it.”

“In our day and age, there are people who recognize climate change and rising sea levels and realize what is happening to our planet,” Michael continues. “School kids and teenagers are teaching their parents about recycling. What drove my generation when it came to our homes—turning off lights, turning off the water faucets while brushing teeth or shaving, adjusting the thermostat up and down to save energy—we need to have that same conservationist mindset when it comes to the environment.”

To those who say recycling will not make a difference, Michael offers a story: “A father and a son are walking along a beach covered with stranded starfish. When the son throws a starfish back into the ocean to save it, the father says, ‘Son, there are so many starfish that you can’t make a difference.’ And the son, continuing to throw starfish back into the water, responds: ‘I made a difference to that starfish.’”

“Recycling is good, and a city-wide curbside collection is the most efficient and effective way to do it.” —Michael Benedetto

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“All of us at TFC do what we do because we know it’s important and necessary. Every bit makes a difference,” Michael concludes with a smile. “We can go into cities and say, recycling is one of the most used services for providing jobs, generating tax revenue, and saving the environment. Just like the starfish, every piece of paper, bottle, and can we recycle gives it a new life. Together, we can make a difference.”

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American Business Women’s Day (September 22) honors the accomplishments of businesswomen nationwide.

Of course, women have been involved in business since the first Colonists landed in America. For over 300 years, most Americans lived on family farms, and the work women performed there was essential to the success of those family businesses. By 1920, however, when, for the first time, most Americans lived in towns and cities and worked in factories or corporate institutions, “a woman’s work” had been relegated to homemaking and childrearing.

That changed in 1941 when America was plunged into World War II. With so many working-age men drafted into the military, women were suddenly needed to fill jobs in factories, government institutions, and private businesses. Overnight, women who worked full-time jobs were not frowned upon but celebrated for their patriotism. Popular opinions reversed when the war ended in 1945 and women were expected to leave the workplace and return to homemaking. Some people, however, bucked that trend.

Kansas City businessman Hilary Bufton Jr. believed that American women, having gained tremendous business knowledge during the war, deserved equal business opportunities with men. In 1949, he sat down in a local coffee shop with Shirley Cupp, Irma Beisel, and Frances Stuckey to discuss founding an organization to support business women.

That meeting resulted in the founding of the American Business Women’s Association on September 22, 1949—the mission of which is “to bring together businesswomen of diverse occupations and to provide opportunities for them to help themselves and others grow personally and professionally through leadership; education, networking support and national recognition.”

That mission statement can also be applied to American Business Women’s Day, celebrated annually on the anniversary of the association’s founding. The holiday was officially recognized in 1983 and 1986 by Congressional resolution and a proclamation issued by President Ronald Reagan.

Today women are essential to the U.S. economy, with 68 million in the workforce and 7.7 million owning businesses.

Being a woman-owned business, The Shopper salutes working women everywhere. To read the stories of local businesswomen, as well as businessmen, we encourage you to read each issue in print and online at www.theshopper.com.

By Rob Lauer

American Business Women’s Day

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Marry? Are you kidding me? I wouldn’t even meet this person in broad daylight at Grand Central Station surrounded by the entire New York City Police SWAT team.

The above writing specimen has the following danger signs that indicate hostility:

Aggressiveness: (upstroke that departs obliquely from a downstroke)

Argumentative: (seen in the buckle lead-in stroke to the small letter p)

Defiance: (buckle of the small letter k inflated out of proportion to the rest of lower case letters)

The writer feels defiance when he senses that others are exercising unfair rule and restraint of his freedom. The writer may not display anger openly; he may find quiet, well-mannered ways of defying.

Domineering: (light or heavy t-bar slanted forward and downward, like a dagger)

Wanting to control, the writer shows frustration in his sarcasm. If the t-bar is light, the writer will try to order others with light sarcasm. If the bar is heavy, the commands can be brutal. The writer feels a need to be demanding in order to get other people to do things for him.

Irritability: (i-dots made with jabs or irregular short dashes)

The writer is provoked by trifles. Can appear in writing temporarily, as when a person comes home from work with the day’s tensions.

Resentment: (always shows hostility to some degree (straight initial upstroke that begins at or below the baseline). The writer has felt imposition in the past, and is “on guard” against it happening again. Long resentment stroke indicates that the resentment comes from a time well in the past.

Stubbornness: (a wedge usually seen in t- or d-stems) Definitely ego-protective, stubbornness is about “saving face.”

Temper: The writer with flying t-bars, or very heavy jabbed i- or j-dots, has a readiness to lose his temper when frustrated.

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—This fiscal year, advocated and voted for an additional $23 Million to help meet Schools’ current financial challenges

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—John de Triquet

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Popular Home Improvements

When it comes to ‘sprucing up the place’ for oneself or the real estate market, these improvements top the list

By Rob Lauer

There are times in the lives of all homeowners when they take a good hard look around and realize they are hungry for some major changes. Maybe the realization is triggered while thumbing through a popular home and gardens magazine or watching one of the countless home-improvement programs on TV. Perhaps they’ve begun comparing their home to those of friends and family members. Or maybe they’re contemplating the possibility of selling their home in the next few years and are thinking of making improvements now that could potentially increase its value.

Regardless of the reason, more Americans than ever are making home improvements. According to a study done by Harvard, the home improvement industry has grown by three percent over the last two years. In 2021 alone, Americans spent $538 billion on home improvement, with projected sales expected to reach $625 in 2025.

Home improvements range from inexpensive do-it-yourself projects to pricey undertakings that require professional contractors. What follows are the most popular areas on which Americans currently are spending their time, energy and money.

Landscaping

Curb appeal says a lot about a home. After all, it alone is responsible for everyone’s first impression of a home. While the house’s outward appearance is obviously an important factor, one shouldn’t underestimate the role of landscape in creating a positive first impression. Investing in new landscaping can help make any house look fresh and appealing.

Every view in landscaping should have a focal point. For the front yard, the focal point should always be the front door, so be sure not to hide it. When considering major plantings such as trees, think about how they will frame the front door as people approach the house.

When planting trees in front of a house, remember that they are considered a permanent fixture in the landscape, so think ahead 12 to 15 years. How tall will the species of tree being planted grow? How far out from the trunk will its branches and root system extend? Make sure that trees are not too close to the house. This will decrease the potential of falling branches or limbs damaging the roof or windows in the future, as well as root systems causing issues with the house’s foundation.

Bushes planted around the house should be trimmed so that they do not grow in front of windows. Flowering plants in beds are always a plus, but if one doesn’t have a green thumb or enjoy gardening, consider planting a low-maintenance ground covering.

Add a collection of plants on either side of the front doorway to better tie in the landscaping with the house itself. For a big impact, opt for plants and planters of differing heights, which create a sense of depth in the area. Pick bold colored flowers and verdant greens, or focus on seasonal flowers that can be changed out frequently for a quick refresh.

The Front Door

A new front door is a quick and simple home improvement project that can make a big difference in its appearance and attract buyers when it is put on the market. According to real estate experts, the return on this investment is usually 90 percent.

If a new door isn’t an option, a fresh coat of paint can go a long way in improving a door’s appearance. As long as there are no structural issues (like cracks, chipping paint, or dents), making a front door look new is as easy as a stroll down the paint aisle of a local retailer.

Door knobs, hinges, door knockers, and house numbers can look worse for the wear after years of exposure to the elements. Removing old hardware and replacing it with upgraded new pieces can change a door’s entire appearance. Consider replacing a traditional turn-style knob with a digital keyless entry model or swapping a numerical house number for one that spells the number out in an elegant script.

The Garage Door

As with the front door, homes with front-facing garage can benefit from a garage door replacement. Besides enhancing a home’s overall appearance, an updated garage door can also differentiate the house from all the others in the neighborhood. Because old garage doors can be an eyesore when trying to sell a home, relators estimate the return on this investment usually exceeds the amount spent.

If a home’s driveway is a straight line from the street to the garage door, planting a curved flower bed where the drive meets the front corner of the yard will create a pleasing sweeping effect that enhances the garage’s overall appearance.

Windows

It may come as a surprise, but new windows can significantly improve a home’s appearance, function and value. As windows age, they do a poorer job of insulating a house from the elements. Old windows often mean more allergens in the home, poor insulation, and higher energy bills. Consider replacing them with new, energy-efficient windows. The return on investment for window replacement is generally high, and prospective buyers will appreciate the upgrade when the home is put on the market.

Flooring

Probably no single element of a home’s interior can impact its overall appearance more than new flooring.

In choosing flooring, keep in mind that different board widths create specific effects. Narrow strips (less than three inches wide) are the traditional choice and create the illusion of more space. Wider planks (more than three inches wide) give a room a more rustic appearance, while parquet floors, with their distinctive geometric design, suit formal spaces.

Hardwoods run the gamut from blond to black, depending on species and finish. Consider floors that complement a home’s furniture and accessories when selecting colors and patterns. Hardwoods also vary in durability. Oak, maple, and cherry are used more often due to their hardness. Exotic woods like mahogany and Brazilian cherry aren’t as durable but are prized for their striking appearance.

Hardwoods, such as red oak, will withstand wear and tear for busy households with pets and kids, while softer woods, such as pine, tend to show scratches. The choice between engineered and solid hardwood will most likely be determined by the location, subfloor, and preferred installation
method. Keep in mind that choosing solid hardwood means scratches from a puppy’s claws or dings from a toddler’s toy can be sanded out and refinished over and over. Preventive care and proper maintenance can keep floors looking good for years.

By some estimates, new flooring can yield an average of upwards of 300 percent return on the investment when the home is sold.

The Kitchen

They say the kitchen is the heart of the home. It’s where a family cooks, eats, socializes with guests, and spends quality time together. So, it makes sense to make this space as welcoming as possible. If appliances look a little dated or the layout is no longer practical, perhaps it’s time to start from scratch with a brand-new look.

Replacing old appliances, including major ones like fridges and stoves, will make a kitchen more attractive and efficient and command a higher price when the home is sold. Recent surveys show that having to replace old and outdated appliances tops the list of turn-offs for potential home buyers.

Drawer pulls and cabinet handles made of metals that were trendy decades ago can make any kitchen look old. Popular metals used in modern kitchen design include matte aluminum, stainless steel, brushed gold, and copper. Installing new pulls and handles on existing cabinetry is a relatively inexpensive upgrade that can make a huge visual impact.

Countertops are a large portion of any kitchen’s landscape. While outdated kitchens may have tile-and-grout or cheap vinyl covering the workspace, the variety of countertop surface options now available is impressive. From solid surfacing varieties that consist of resin and polymers to natural stone varieties such as marble and granite, there’s an option for everyone’s style and budget.

Over the last few years, designers have become increasingly creative and are using heavy-duty structural materials for countertops, such as brick, tile, soapstone and quartz.

Because the kitchen is typically the busiest area in a home and the place where people are most likely to congregate, adding an island, countertop, or breakfast bar with seating brings new life to the space. From families with children doing homework to parents entertaining friends while cooking, kitchen seating has become essential to the modern home.

Kitchen lighting, while often an afterthought, is essential for safety and ambiance. If a kitchen contains only one overhead ambient lighting fixture, consider installing recessed lighting with a dimmer switch for versatility while entertaining, cooking, or just relaxing for a midnight snack. Under-cabinet lighting to illuminate countertops and pendant lighting over a kitchen island are practical additions that also create a feeling of elegance.

The Bathroom

Over the past decade, homeowners and home-buyers have embraced the idea of the bathroom as a spa-like retreat from the world. But one needn’t do an entire bathroom overhaul to help achieve that aesthetic.

Whether painting the walls or installing new tiles, choose soft, muted colors to establish a tranquil environment. Avoid high-contrast pairings, such as black and white or blue and orange, which often appear bold and energizing rather than calming. Pairing warm neutrals with nature-inspired colors like seafoam green or sky blue creates peaceful palettes that would look right at home in an upscale spa.

Create a bright, airy look by outfitting a bathroom with lots of shimmering reflective surfaces. Large-scale mirrors, chrome fixtures, and polished tile all produce a sense of lightness and brightness, which can lift one’s mood.

Because tubs and showers are usually the focal points of any bathroom, replacing them can completely transform the space. A glass shower door lends a luxurious look to any bathroom, but the reason for installing one might not be all about looks. Because this shower lacks a ledge or lip to step over when entering the shower, it is an excellent choice for aging family members or anyone with mobility difficulties. As in a lavish spa, a seat in the shower will encourage relaxation, making it a fantastic minor upgrade. Tile the bench to match the rest of the shower, or add a bar made of a contrasting material like teak or glass.

Replacing outdated faucets, lighting, and bathroom accessories is a great way to refresh the space while tailoring it to one’s personal style.

Does one’s bathroom need more storage? Are family members tired of sharing one sink? Replacing the vanity is an excellent solution enhancing its visual appeal.

Changing a bathroom’s flooring or updating tiles can help create a customized look that will attract buyers when the time comes to sell a home.

A Fresh Coat of Paint

Sometimes a fresh coat of paint is all it takes to bring a room back to life. It’s also a great do-it-yourself project that won’t cost an arm and a leg. Painting a room in neutral colors such as whites, grays, or creams creates the feeling of a larger and cleaner space.

Kitchens, in particular, can take on a dramatically new look by simply painting the existing cabinets. From white to blue to two-tone looks, color options are nearly limitless. Bring home samples and examine them in the light throughout the day. How does it look in natural and artificial light? Find a color that looks great in both and compliments current fixtures, appliances, and countertops. Painting cabinet boxes, doors, and drawer faces can be time-consuming (experts recommend setting aside three days for the task), but it is also one of the most noticeable and rewarding updates any homeowner can do.
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Limiting Beliefs

For years I believed that I had barely graduated from high school because my grades were so poor. I honestly thought that my worst grades had been in Chemistry. This belief impacted how I saw myself, I put limitations on myself because of it. I even put off working on my doctorate degree for a long time because I believed it would be too much for me. Then, some time ago, I had a huge surprise.

Karen and I were going through old papers when she found my high school report card from my senior year. She brought it to me and said, “I thought you said you didn’t make good grades in high school.”

“I didn’t,” I replied.

“Well, look at this report card,” Karen continued. “It is all A’s and B’s. Even your Chemistry grade is good.”

I was amazed! How in the world did I get this wrong belief about myself? For most of my life, I have struggled with it and put limitations on myself because of it. How did that happen? The question for me now was: would this new information change how I view myself? Would I now discard those limitations I placed on myself?

What if you found out that you have been believing a lie about yourself and your capabilities? What changes would you make? Or would you continue as you are?

The question for all of us is: “What lies are we living with?” Because of these limiting beliefs, we fail to take advantage of the opportunities that could be ours.

Let us challenge one of the beliefs that limit many of us: “Everyone should like me.” When we operate with the belief that everyone should like us, we are minimized if a person is upset with us or criticizes us. We think the problem is with us, not them.

What if you found out that you have been believing a lie about yourself and your capabilities? What changes would you make?

In her book “Celtic Daily Prayer,” Mary Lyon pointed out: “Nine-tenths of our suffering is caused by others not thinking as much of us as we think they ought.” It seems the more we seek another’s approval, the worse we feel about ourselves.

It would be healthy for us to ask ourselves: “Why do I keep trying to impress other people? Each time I do it, I feel worse about myself. I know it doesn’t work, but I keep doing it.”

Perhaps we’re driven by the belief that another person’s approval will change what we believe about ourselves. But even if someone does praise us, we will not accept the compliment unless we believe it to be true.

Constantly seeking approval from others does not work because we are giving someone else the power to decide how we should feel about ourselves. That power and authority should be with us.

Next month we will continue looking at these limiting beliefs and ways to handle them.

Dr. Austin has decades of experience dealing with relationships. He charges clients on a sliding scale according to their ability to pay.

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“Catching the Wave of Change”

At a recent Retail Alliance Breakfast Club event, Harold Lloyd spoke to local business professionals about the importance of “Catching the Wave of Change”—how to spot, embrace and manage change within a business.
Popular Home Improvements

When it comes to ‘sprucing up the place’ for oneself or the real estate market, these improvements top the list.