

presenting

# HOME beautiful

These local vendors can help you  
make (and maintain) your beautiful home.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY James Kellar

This special Home Beautiful Guide will be featured on the *Bloom Magazine* website, [magbloom.com](http://magbloom.com), for a full year.

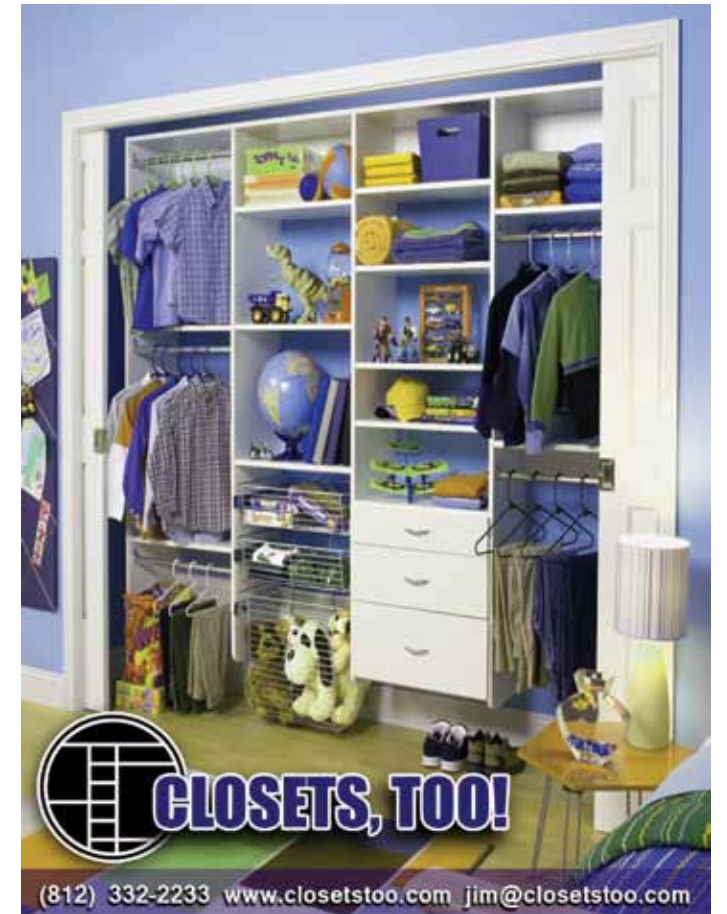
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## Closets, and Shower Doors, Too!

Jim Jeffries, owner of Closets, Too!, thinks organizing closets does more than make things look neater — he thinks it makes life a little nicer, too. “You get your day off to a better start if you don’t have to sort through a pile of stuff just to get dressed,” he says. “People just function better if they’re organized.”

Closets, Too! has been family owned and operated in Bloomington since 1987. Jeffries, son J.P., and daughter-in-law Tina Cooper do all of the work. “We think the people who do the most conscientious job are the people who own the business,” Jeffries says. The company designs and sells customized shelving systems. Wire shelving has always been popular, but Jeffries says now many previous customers are upgrading to solid, melamine-laminate, cabinet-style shelving. And while it may be called Closets, Too!, the company also installs shower doors. “We’ve been putting in shower doors from the start,” Jeffries says. “That used to mean bypass doors, but now showers are really glass enclosures. Everything is open and the only thing keeping the water from escaping are clear panels of glass, making the bathroom look much more spacious.”

Every closet system is individually designed, so every system starts with a consultation. “We try to get an idea of each customer’s personal style and how they live, then we start the design, because the system has to work for the customer. If it’s not working for them, it’s not working,” Jeffries says. “But no matter their style — whether they need to toss things into cubbies or place everything just so — I know we can design a closet system that will work for them.”



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## Reign in Energy Costs With a Solar System

It's a fact of life — energy costs may fluctuate, but they will ultimately rise. Homeowners looking to reign in those costs can do so with the help of ever-improving solar technology, says David Mann, owner and founder of Mann Plumbing/MPI Solar. “The message I like to convey is that this is not experimental technology,” Mann says. “It’s a fast-growing industry, costs are coming down, and the systems are durable and long lasting.”

“With the installation of a solar photovoltaic system, you’re fixing your electricity costs for the next 25 years,” Mann says. “Now, with the systems themselves more affordable than ever, homeowners can recoup their investment more quickly than they could even just a few years ago.” In addition, the federal government offers a 30 percent tax credit on qualifying solar equipment installed through the end of 2016.

One of the greenest technologies offered by Mann Plumbing/MPI Solar is radiant floor heating. “The cheapest way to heat water is with the sun,” Mann says. “With radiant floor heating, we install a solar hot water system on the roof and use solar energy to heat the floor, the room, and all the water for household use. It’s very energy efficient, and it’s something more and more people are asking for when they build.”

Mann Plumbing/MPI Solar has been a part of the Bloomington community since 1992. David Mann says he’s proud to have a well-trained staff ready to install solar systems. “We’re very good at what we do,” he says. “We have very professional crews who install quality materials. We’re working with our customers to invest in energy savings over a long period of time.”

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## Home Automation Solutions

Over the past nine years, Experience Technology has built a solid reputation for providing audio and video solutions, whether that means the installation of a flat screen TV or the creation of a home theater system. Now satisfied customers are turning to Experience Technology for innovative solutions to more complex problems. "We've developed a reputation for providing one-off solutions for our customers," says co-owner Chad Fish. "These aren't your typical entertainment, security, or landscaping issues. It might be something like a water-flow issue. And while we might not know plumbing, we're good at digging in our heels and doing the research to find a solution."

Fish says for many homeowners, the answer to their problems lies in home automation. "Today's technology is about more than entertainment," he says. "It's about security for the home, landscape lighting, heated floors, even automated drapes and blinds." It's also about the power to communicate effectively, whether that's with a phone call, text, or email. "We can be very specific about how we notify people, and why," Fish says. "If there is something that shouldn't happen between midnight and five in the morning, then you're going to be notified. Otherwise, you won't be."

When people need home automation solutions, they know where to turn. "Once our customers have experienced what we do and how we do it, we get some interesting calls," Fish says with a smile. "When people haven't been able to find answers elsewhere, they turn to us. That's because they know we go to great lengths to figure things out and that we'll exhaust all possibilities to turn up an appropriate solution."

## Lean on G

If there's something Donald Griffin, Jr., owner of Griffin Realty, finds exciting, it is finding creative ways to market your home. "My job is to put your house in front of as many people as possible," he says. For years he's been doing little things, like adding lights to his distinctive signs (they feature a man's silhouette leaning on a capital letter G, and tie in nicely with his company's slogan: "When you need somebody to lean on, lean on G."). But as technology offers more options, so does his marketing strategy.

"I've got a technologically driven business," Griffin says. "And though it may be boutique in size, I make sure I have more tools in place than anyone else."

Those tools include creating "My House" business cards for home sellers. The cards include the home's address, a photo, and, most importantly, a QR code leading to an online listing, complete with a narrated virtual tour. Griffin Realty also takes advantage of three different MLS directories — not just in Bloomington, but in Indianapolis and Bedford, too.

If you're buying a home, Griffin's expertise is an asset. He's been a Bloomington real estate agent for more than 20 years, so he knows the community, the neighborhoods, and the market. Getting people settled in a new home is something he finds fulfilling. "I love marketing and I love helping people, too," Griffin says. Known for the red Mini Cooper he drives around town, Griffin has a collection of tiny cars on his desk. Looking at the symbols of travel, he remarks that he often tells people, "We can take you anywhere, but the best place we can take you is home."



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Artfully presented wares at Relish.



CURATED, CONTEMPORARY STYLE:

# Relish

## WHEN

Brad and Sharon Fugate opened their contemporary furniture store, Relish, in 2004, they chose to locate it in the heart of Bloomington, just off the B-Line Trail near the downtown Square. The urban-modern store features a carefully curated selection of home furnishings, textiles, and lighting as well as women's apparel and accessories. "We're offering a shopping experience that's really a throw-back to old-school retail with a focus on customer service and quality merchandise," Sharon says. "Our staff is very attentive and they work hard to develop relationships with our customers. It greatly enhances the shopping experience at Relish and we're complimented on them frequently."

The focus on building relationships extends to vendors. Much of the merchandise is acquired from studios, cottage industries, and manufacturers who rely on brick-and-mortar retailers to sell their goods. One

example is newly acquired vendor American Leather. "We're so excited about the partnership we have with them," Sharon says. "They feel the independent retailer is the best venue for their product, and we agree." While American Leather specializes in fine leather upholstery, each beautifully designed piece is also available in fabric. "We had said that we would never have a sleeper sofa on our floor but this leader in furniture innovation took that product, reengineered it, and made it absolutely comfortable without compromising aesthetic," Sharon says.

This element of design and freshness is carried throughout the store from beautiful soft goods and distinctive case goods to modern-inspired lighting and unexpected art objects. The loft-like space showcases detail at every turn and acts as a backdrop to an interesting mix of materials, texture, and layers of subtle color.

The same clean lines, inspired design, and eye to quality can be found in the selection of women's apparel at Relish. "We're especially drawn to the drapery and movement of fabric, uneven hem lines, and attention to detail," Sharon says. This

season-less, timeless selection is perfect for building a wardrobe one piece at a time. Accessories include fashion-forward shoes and handbags, as well as handcrafted jewelry.

Shopping at Relish is a way to recapture the kind of shopping experience many thought was gone forever in the age of big-box stores and online retailers. "We think the best way to make a decision is to purchase in-house, with a knowledgeable staff," Sharon says. "And we're here to offer just that."

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## Design YOUR Outdoor Living Space

There really hasn't been a time when homeowners haven't enjoyed getting outside and sitting on a porch, patio, or deck, but the latest trend is creating real outdoor living spaces. "We get a lot of calls for outdoor rooms," says Seth Inman, co-owner of Bloomington Valley Nursery. "We install a lot of shade structures, pergolas, and awnings. Shade sails are very popular. And a lot of people want water features."

Inman says he's been busy turning decorative pottery into fountains, and boulders into bubblers. "If there is something that even seems like it could hold water, we can turn it into a fountain," he says with confidence. "You're only limited by your imagination. I like taking a customer's idea and seeing it through to fruition. I like the challenge; it's a lot of fun."

This is the place where "Seek the Unique" is a motto, and Inman says a recent find is a living wall of plants. "You plant on a vertical surface — herbs or low-lying plants like hens and chicks," he says. And while it is typically an outdoor hanging, a living wall can easily be repurposed for indoor use, especially in the kitchen for growing herbs.

With two landscape designers on staff to help coordinate your plans, now might be the time to create that outdoor room you've always wanted. "Our designers can oversee a project and assist customers in many ways," Inman says. "They can offer a rendering, which is a piece of art in itself. It really gives you a feel for what things will look like after they are installed. And we offer everything from that rendering up to a full-blown master plan."

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## The Design/Build Approach

If you have ever considered building a new home, you know there are many steps involved, from choosing a design and soliciting bids to selecting a builder and finalizing construction. Because of that complexity, many homeowners are streamlining the process with the design-build approach. Craig Bailey and Don Weiler are design-build specialists who oversee new home construction from the first steps right through to the finishing touches. Bailey & Weiler Design/Build is a specialist in the design, construction, and renovation of custom homes.

When clients meet with Bailey & Weiler Design/Build, they are walked through each phase of new home construction. "It's a seamless process from concept to completion," Weiler says. Design-build offers advantages over traditional home construction, including faster project times and improved selection guidance. "When you build a home, there are thousands of decisions to be made and we can help with each of them, not just with the bones of the house, but with the finishes too," Weiler says. "It's common at some point in the project for the homeowner to simply turn over the selections to us since we have repeatedly demonstrated our understanding of their style and vision."

It may be that the biggest reward is how the design-build process impacts homeowners financially. "You consider budget early in the process, so there are no surprises," Weiler says. He adds that the entire process is easier when there is one building partner held accountable for the entire project. "As a homeowner, you want everything to be in place before you start — you want your goals, your plan and your budget to align," he says. "With design-build, that's easier because it's all in one shop."

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## Guiding Home Buyers Through the Mortgage Process

For prospective homebuyers, choosing First Republic Mortgage is the right choice. Regional Sales Manager Nancy Eberle says that's because unlike much of their competition, First Republic's only business is mortgages. "Because we don't have distractions, such as cross-selling other products, we're completely focused on getting our customers the right mortgage," she says. "We take the time to listen, to consult with our customers, and to provide them with the knowledge they need to be completely prepared for the mortgage process."

First Republic was established in 1996, in Indianapolis. Now, with 10 locations, First Republic is one of the largest independent mortgage bankers in Indiana. The Bloomington office opened in 2011.

The First Republic team of mortgage professionals has an extensive background in banking and mortgage lending.

The origination team includes state and nationally licensed loan officers Crystal Bailey, Kathy Bowman, Mark Taylor, Karan Rastall, and Eberle. The processing and support staff includes Susan King, Jill Rogers, and Mary Jo Ricks. The company's compliance and quality control administrator is Bonnie Hamilton.

First Republic works to make the mortgage process personalized and more responsive for their customers. "As an independent mortgage lender we work with a number of investors," Eberle says. "And because we work with them directly, we have more flexibility, enabling us to get the best products and rates for our customers."

Even with its statewide presence, staying local is important to First Republic. Loans are processed in the Bloomington office and the company uses local appraisers who are familiar with the local market. "Our customers' contact people



(clockwise from back left) Jill Rogers, Susan King, Mary Jo Ricks, and Bonnie Hamilton.

will be right here, in Bloomington, and personally available to them," Eberle says. "They can come by and talk to us when they need to. We know communication is critical, and we can adapt that to whatever works best for our customers — text or email, a phone call or a personal visit. We want to keep the lines of communication open and everything running smoothly."

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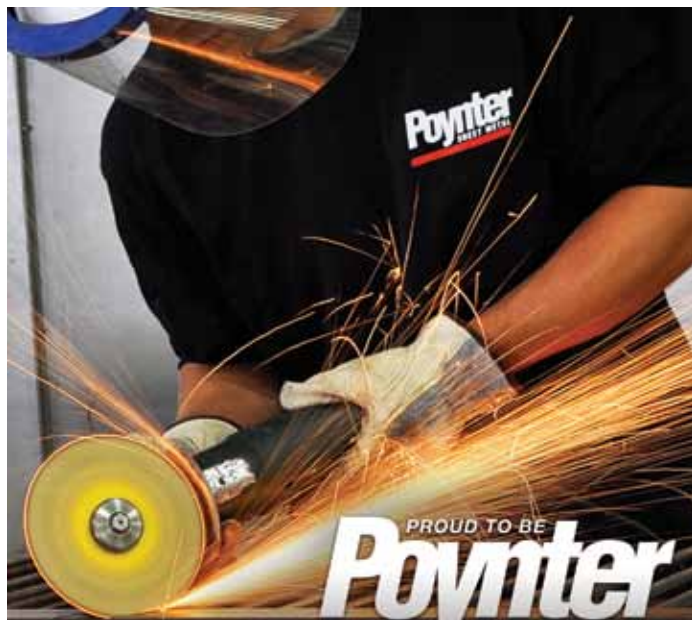
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## Specializing in Custom Metal Fabrication

Trying to sum up Poynter Sheet Metal can be daunting, even for project manager Ken Campanella. "We're a diverse company," he says. "If it's metal, we do it."

Poynter Sheet Metal was founded in 2000 as a local commercial ventilation company. Today it's one of the nation's largest sheet metal contractors with more than 2,000 active customers in 15 states, with just over 300 employees. Everything is fabricated and shipped from the company's Bloomington headquarters. Locally, Poynter has completed more than 500 jobs for Indiana University in the past 12 years, and has done work for the city and numerous local businesses.

Despite its name, Poynter does a lot more than sheet metal. "We do a lot of residential work, including specialty metal work in stainless steel, aluminum, wrought iron, and copper," says Campanella. Poynter offers homeowners unique options in custom metal backsplashes, countertops, railings, and more.

They might be known for their big jobs, but Poynter is happy to take on small jobs too. "We mean it when we say no job is too big or too small," Campanella says. "While our biggest job was \$30 million, we routinely do \$50 fabrications."

Having been in Bloomington for more than a decade, Campanella says most people have seen the company's work. "We've done the ductwork in a lot of buildings and a lot of handrails people use every day, they just aren't aware it's our work," he says. "What's more important is that we're one of the largest employers in Monroe County, that we're involved in so many industries, and that we do work for individuals, too. There's not much work we turn down."



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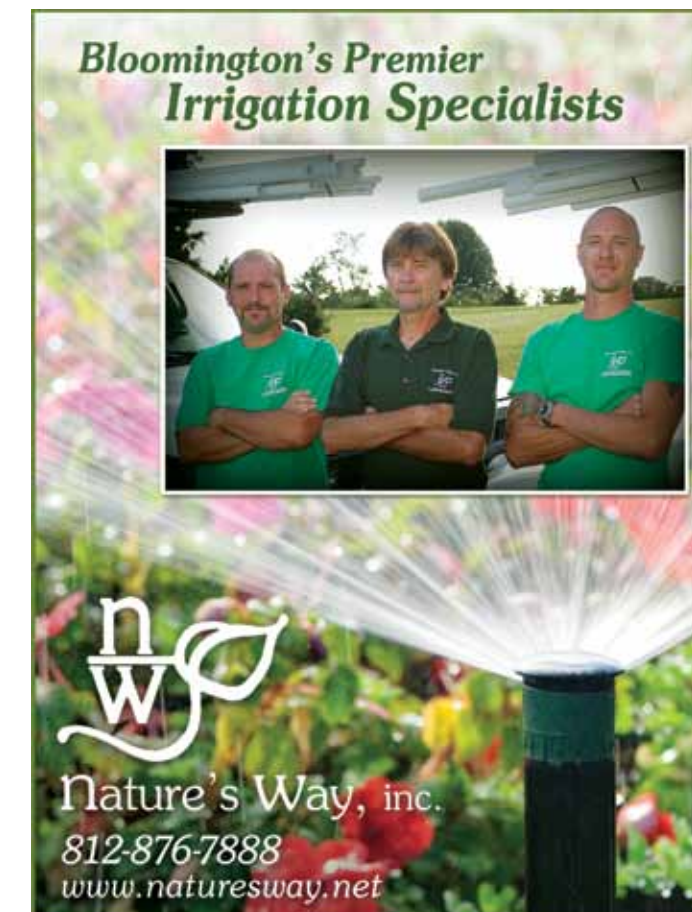
Jeremiah Young, president of Nature's Way, likes to say he's in the first impression business. "Whether it's your home or business, you're judged by your landscape and curb appeal," Young says. As the area's premier landscape contractor, Nature's Way provides landscape solutions for residential, commercial, and sports and recreation customers. Irrigation Operations Manager Jim Hollars says installing a sprinkler system is the best way to keep lawns lush while keeping costs down.

"In the future, we're going to have tighter water regulations, so we're always looking for new and better ways to conserve water and save money," Hollars says. "With a sprinkler system, you have up-front costs, but after a couple of years it's paid for itself and you see a significant cost savings over the life of the system."

The company also offers aesthetic water features. "Many people want to incorporate the soothing effects of running water into their landscape," Young says. "With the addition of koi fish and aquatic plant life, water features can offer many of the same benefits as naturally occurring ponds."

When you've been a part of the Bloomington community for 38 years, you build a reputation. Jim Hollars and Tony Parker, irrigation maintenance technician, have a combined 35 years experience in the field. When you add the talents of Jordan Allen, an installation technician, it's easy to see why Young says, "We really are the trusted experts in the area. If someone has a problem, they call us."

Nature's Way has earned that trust. "What you get with Nature's Way is decades of experience," he says. "With us, you get people you can trust to give you your money's worth and people who will be there today and tomorrow."



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## Full-Spectrum Interior Design

Lisa Smith, owner of Lisa Smith Interiors, sees several advantages to working from her home on Bloomington's east side. "One big advantage is that we recently completed a major remodel to our home, so it provides a wonderful studio environment to display all the things we can do," Smith says. "Another advantage is it lets us focus on our clients rather than on the demands of a retail store." As a full-spectrum interior design business, Lisa Smith Interiors engages projects of all types, including planning and specifications for new construction and remodels, kitchen and bath design, as well as selecting window treatments, furnishings, art, and accessories for existing homes. "Most of our projects are private homes, but we also enjoy designing restaurants and offices," Smith says.

Smith started the business 12 years ago after owning a retail kitchen and bath studio. Two years ago she hired Project Manager Alice Laskowski, who worked in sports marketing for 24 years before making a career switch. Laskowski said she had a lot of misconceptions about what it meant to work in interior design. "I always imagined interior designers in their high heels and designer clothes, but it's not all glamour from the inside!" she says with a laugh. "It still surprises me how much detail and effort goes into each project, but that effort creates beautiful spaces for our clients."

The two say their relationship makes for a great work atmosphere. "We talk a lot, we laugh a lot, and in between we get a lot of work done," Smith says. "We have fun and we enjoy what we do. Hopefully, our clients enjoy themselves too."