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Ask a professional designer for advice before you begin

By **BOB SANTORO**
SPECIAL TO THE CONWAY DAILY SUN

Currently, my team and I are doing a ton of remodeling, inside and out, on a house in Jackson for a single woman who is a big DIY-er (Do It Yourself-er).

She has all of her own tools and even her own workbench, I have seen them, and I have seen her work, it's not bad and I applaud her for it. As we have done all of these projects for her, she has said to me with wide eyes; "Bob, you have great ideas and advice; the only thing my other contractors have ever said was 'You're the customer, whatever you want.'"

I explained to her, that's because they are contractors and we are a Design-

Build Firm. I went on to explain that we have made all the mistakes and seen all of the great work as well, and our name is on it, but more importantly, you want to be proud of the designs and workmanship in your home.

As anyone can imagine, after 37 years in the design, remodeling, and landscape business, I have seen it all — from the disasters to the masterpieces. I can look at something and immediately tell you if it was done by someone who truly knew what they were doing or was an amateur.

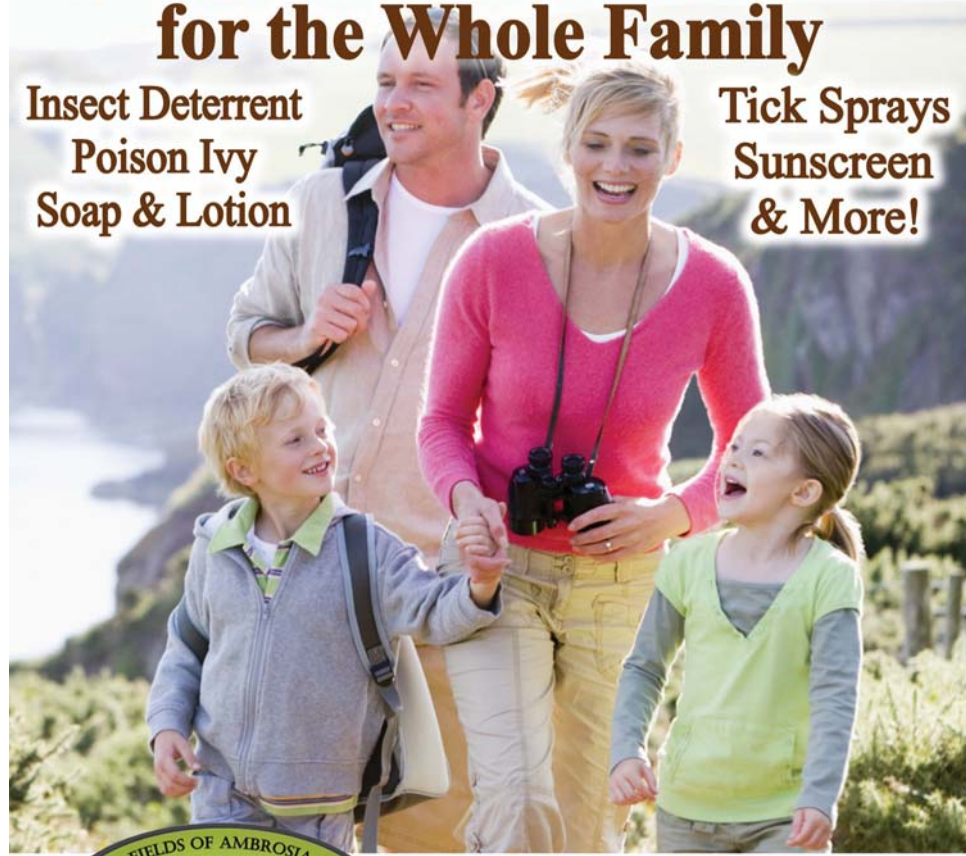
Words can't describe and I can't express enough the value of hiring an experienced designer. It is worth its weight in

see **DESIGN** page 23

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AFTER: We reconfigured the front elevation that made it obvious where the front door should be. This included a larger window, extending the front porch under the new door and relocating the electric meter to the side of the house. (COURTESY PHOTO)

DESIGN from page 22

gold. You can buy everything you want to buy in your local home center and nursery and do it yourself, but, by all means, hire someone who has already seen and/or made all the mistakes. Save your grief, aggravation, regrets, and especially your time and money, and get good advice!

Even after 37 years, I still have my DVR set to record every episode of "This Old House" and "Ask This Old House" on PBS. I also subscribe to multiple trade newsletters. I offer this information because you should NEVER ever stop learning! Good information is priceless especially when putting into the single largest investment you have, your home.

With all of the technology now, on a regular basis, I email clients, past and present, internet videos on how to correctly tackle a new project they are interested in doing at home that they want to do themselves. Never stop learning and never stop learning to do it the right way.

There was more than once early on in my career that clients called me after the fact and said, "We should have gone with you, we tried to do it ourselves and we



BEFORE: A typical example of a camp cottage a client recently purchased. There was no formal front door facing the road. (COURTESY PHOTO)

made so many mistakes." A million times, I have told people the old adage: "You can pay me now, or you can pay me later."

The money spent to make sure something is designed correctly is key! You can be your own contractor. You can be your own everything doing whatever you want but BEFORE you begin a project you haven't done before, get some design advice, it's cheaper than you think and will save you big in the long run!

For more about Jackson Home & Garden, go to jxnHomeAndGarden.com, call (603) 603-383-3333 or email Bob@jxnHomeAndGarden.com.

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