



## Live Closer to the Water

FOR SOME, A LARGE, BUILT-IN AQUARIUM IS THE CURE FOR SEASONAL CABIN FEVER

Kevin Sheller, who owns the Schaumburg-based **AQUARIUM ARTISTS** (814 Mansfield Ct., Schaumburg; 847-962-9677, [aquariumartists.com](http://aquariumartists.com)), has a slate of contractors at his disposal to install his signature freshwater aquariums, which use live plants and colorful fish for a lush effect that mimics a pond. "Most people say they've never seen anything like it," he says. (He maintains that captive-bred freshwater fish have a lower mortality rate than saltwater fish because they go through fewer hands in their journey to the tank.) After installation, maintenance is virtually trouble free for the owner: The tank includes a mechanical tray that automatically feeds the fish and, for \$100 to \$250 a month, the company will make cleaning house calls. The whole job—including construction, equipment, plumbing, and the fish and rocks or plants—costs about \$5,000 to \$6,000. **OLD TOWN AQUARIUM** (1538 N. Wells St.; 312-642-8763, [oldtownaquarium.com](http://oldtownaquarium.com)) offers the same level of service for saltwater aquariums, and no request, the owners say, is too large or outlandish—the company once installed an 18-foot-long tank as a room divider for a business.

## Personalize Your Doorknobs

A doorknob from **NANZ** (*Merchandise Mart, Suite 103; 312-527-1300*) is a splurge to begin with, so you may as well go all the way and have it laser-engraved with a monogram. "The most appropriate place would be in a study," says Austin Kamm of Nanz, a custom manufacturer of solid-brass door and cabinet hardware, based in New York City. "Or some people have very personal closet spaces." The family crest would work for the rest of the house.



## Immortalize Your Loved Ones

AND WE DON'T MEAN YOUR CHILDREN

Based in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, equestrian portraitist **JULIA INCE** has traveled throughout the Chicago area to visit the homes and stables of clients. Getting a sense of a horse's personality and a firsthand look at his color, she says, is the key to creating an accurate painted portrait. "I could always tell the difference between one horse and another," Ince says. "Some say a horse is a horse, but that's not true." She works in oil and completes most commissions in about two months. A portrait of a subject's head, neck, and shoulders with no background is \$1,500; the whole horse with a background is \$2,000. 920-563-9833, [jullaince.com](http://jullaince.com)

## Spiffy Up

THREE WAYS TO MAKE YOUR HOMELIFE SHINE

1

Get a green spring-cleaning. **SPARKLE QUEEN** (773-832-4895; [sparklequeen.com](http://sparklequeen.com)) offers top-to-bottom housecleaning using all-natural, nontoxic products. The "Super Sparkle" service is the ultimate home-keeping indulgence: For \$75 an hour (for the first and usually dirtiest visit), in addition to all the standard tasks, a team of two will do the chores you wish would simply go away, such as cleaning the insides of cabinets and the refrigerator, washing trash cans, and mopping under the beds. On second thought, why wait until spring?

2

Hang your artwork—finally. Dann Witezak and Natasha Spencer, the husband-and-wife team behind **THE ART OF INSTALLATION** (773-752-0477; [theartofinstallation.com](http://theartofinstallation.com)), understand why it can take years for people to display their artwork, a big issue being the fear of pounding nails into walls. Witezak, a former chief preparator for a museum, and Spencer, a visual artist by training, can do it all—from helping you cull the showcase-worthy gems from an overwhelming collection of family photos or art, to grouping, framing, and installing the winners.

3

Streamline your electronics. Gawkl all you like, but when the time comes to buy, turn to **THE LITTLE GUYS HOME ELECTRONICS** (18305 S. Halsted St., Glenwood; 708-754-8844, [thelittleguys.com](http://thelittleguys.com)), a full-service tech emporium in the south suburbs. The business excels in putting together the right combination of equipment to satisfy a household with diverging tastes—for example, an HDTV sports fan, a Nintendo player, a TiVo addict, and a penny pincher. The Little Guys can deliver and install, too.



Live Beautifully

## Subscribe to Flowers

TWO FINE FLORISTS WHO DELIVER

There it is, waiting for you: a lovely arrangement of fresh cut flowers, swapped for the droopy one that was there before. Not every florist offers regular in-home delivery; **ASRAI GARDEN** (1935 W. North Ave.; 773-782-0680, [asraigarden.com](http://asraigarden.com)) in Wicker Park is one that does. "We have keys to their home," explains the owner, Elizabeth Cronin. "Or we bring the flowers to the doorman." One of her longtime customers likes to have a flat of wheatgrass installed as a dramatic centerpiece in her home; another owns a large antique urn, into which Cronin slips a vase arrangement of huge green selloum leaves. Lisa Paul, whose four-year-old floral business is called **COLOR & COMPANY** (509 N. Racine Ave.; 312-810-2404, [colorandcompany.com](http://colorandcompany.com)), is another good choice.