

# Helping to Make THE RIGHT CHOICES

From floor to ceiling, in the kitchen and even behind walls.

PHOTOGRAPHY **WALTER FRAN CZYK**

## DEBBIE SKINKLE

PRESIDENT

*AyA Kitchen Designs*

**What's new at AyA Kitchen Designs?** "A minimalist aesthetic with clean lines and the ability to reduce clutter contribute to a stress-free environment; this is the philosophy we are seeing dominate in design," says Debbie. "We are focusing on how we interact with the space around us to create harmony and balance in our lives. Open concept design, technology, integrated appliances and fixtures, effective storage solutions and timeless colours and materials allow form and function to complement each other like never before. It's very exciting."

**What are the advantages of using a kitchen designer?** "Most people see the value in hiring professionals for new and renovation projects and the kitchen is an investment that has significant impact on our daily lives," Debbie says. "At AyA Kitchen Designs, you are working with a team of experts who will provide a streamlined process to your kitchen renovation experience from start to finish. Our clients meet with kitchen designers who have extensive design and construction knowledge. We provide a visual design process, making it easier to understand and personalize. We take the apprehension away from the material and colour selection process by offering a wide range of options. Your project will be designed, managed and installed by in-house professionals. We remove the stress so our clients can enjoy the process and the results for years to come."



## LISA POSTMA & MICHELLE MERRALL

SALES REPRESENTATIVES

*VanVark Electric*

**What is your store all about?** As a full-service electrical contracting business and retail lighting showroom, in business for over 50 years, our goal is to help people make the right lighting choices for their home. We try to determine what the customer is looking for and guide them through the process of selecting the perfect light.

**Why do customers come here?** Our biggest selling point is our customer service. People come here because of our friendly and helpful staff who listen to our customers. We have quality light fixtures and our prices are competitive. VanVark Electric's showroom has a large selection of fixtures to choose from in many different styles. If a customer can't find what they are looking for in the showroom, they can browse through our catalogues or check out our website for more options.

**What lighting trends do you see?** "It's all about the bulb, the Edison bulb and the antique Victorian-style bulb for a warm retro-style feel," says Michelle. Many contemporary fixtures display just the bulb for an open, transparent look with clean, symmetrical lines.

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## LARRY & MELANIE SINE

OWNERS  
*Sine's Flooring*

### What do you sell, supply and service?

"Basically anything to do with flooring," says Larry. Sine's supplies and installs ceramic tiles, natural stone, carpet, luxury vinyl plank flooring and sheet vinyl. "We do full walk-in showers, bathrooms, tile floors, walls, everything," says Melanie. Their two stores, in Cobourg and Brighton, carry a full line of Hunter Douglas blinds and have a qualified Hunter Douglas installer to do the measuring and installations, including shutters, roller shades, screens, verticals and venetian blinds.

**Why do customers come to you?** "We tend to take every job on as if it's our own," says Larry. "We want to make people happy, obviously. The installers are the same way. They don't rush through the job. They tend to take their time and make it like it's their own place, which we feel is very important. It's a friendly atmosphere," says Larry. "We joke with people. It's very casual. Life is stressful enough, we don't need this to be a stressful time," says Melanie. Many clients are second-generation customers, the children of people Sine's has dealt with before.

### What do you enjoy about this work?

Helping people in the store make decisions, says Melanie. "The satisfaction after a job is done," says Larry. "People being happy – that's the joy of it."



**ROBERT GLECOFF, MANAGER, NENA REDDOM, KITCHEN DESIGNER, TRACY MACFARLANE, KITCHEN DESIGNER, JANET SPROULE, FLOORING CONSULTANT, DIANA DICKSON, KITCHEN DESIGNER, SHANNON LEACY, DÉCOR CONSULTANT, GREG WOOD, FLOORING CONSULTANT**  
*Cobourg Home Hardware Building Centre*

**Tell us about your design service:** "Our design centre staff design kitchens, flooring and baths and make sure they can fulfill what customers desire when they come in for a renovation," says manager Robert Glecoff. We design all rooms and we supply kitchens, flooring tile, bath fixtures, some furniture and appliances. We're a whole house design centre," says Robert. Some staff members have been designing for more than 20 years. "They're very confident and comfortable in what they do. They have a very high customer satisfaction rate."

**What makes work a pleasure?** "Our people enjoy helping people fulfill their dreams," Robert says. "A redesign or a renovation is usually a dream, not a necessity, and people have a clear vision of what they want. I believe our design staff enjoy fulfilling that and helping clients succeed in reaching their goals." The store carries a range of products, fixtures and cabinetry to suit every budget." Anywhere your imagination goes we can take you there," he says. Home experts are also available at Gilmer's Home Hardware Building Centre in Port Hope. "They have an amazing showcase there, lots of great displays and ideas, and helpful staff."

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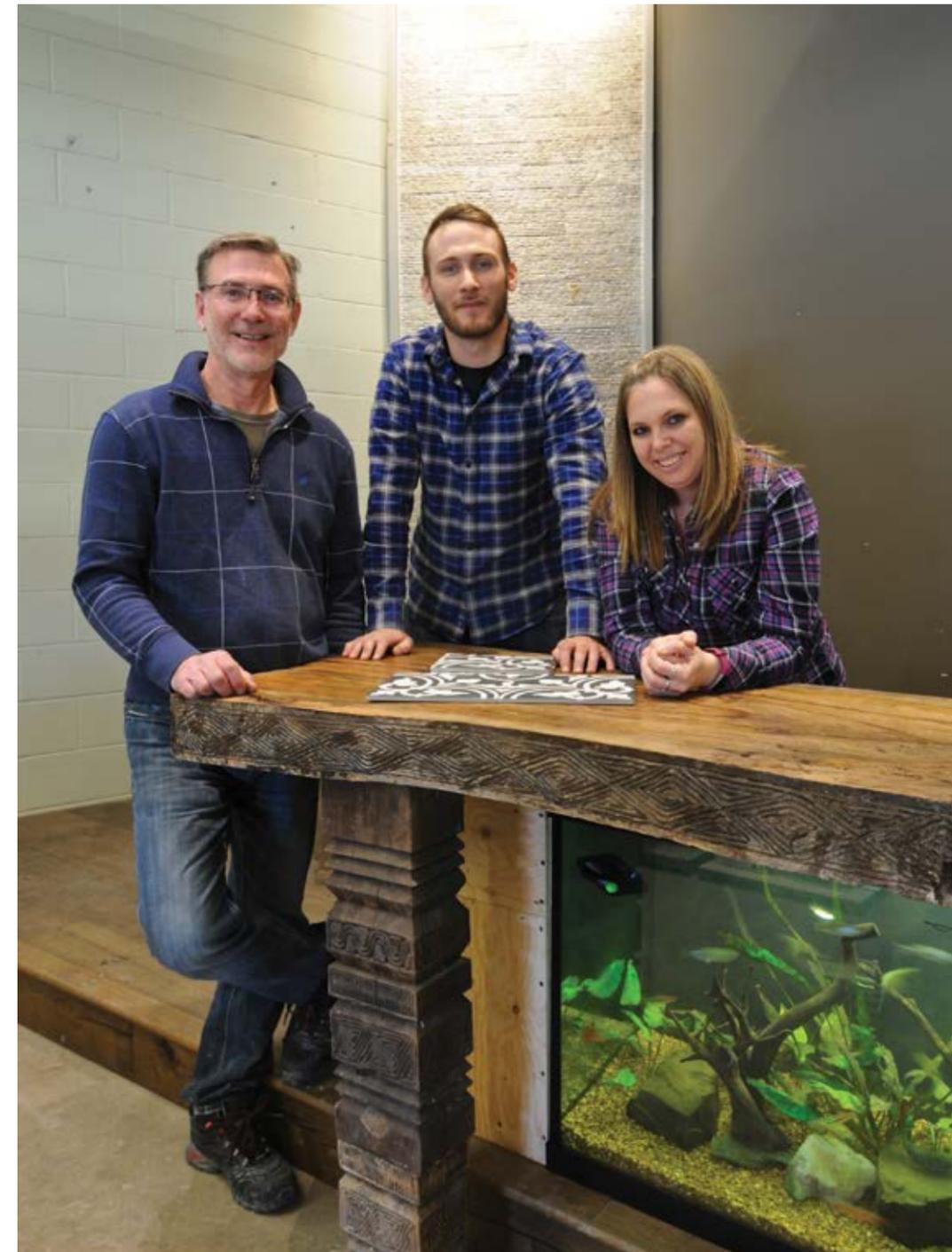
**HOWIE MURNEY**  
OWNER  
*Howie's Blinds*

**Tell us about your business:** "I come to people's homes and do free consultations about window coverings," says owner Howie Murney. "I give them suggestions – the negatives and the positives, the dos and don'ts – about every blind. Then it's up to them to make a choice about what type of window covering they want. I basically educate the customer and they'll choose the direction they want to go." Once a customer chooses window coverings, Howie installs them.

**How did you get started?** "It was 30 years ago," Howie explains. "Pardon the pun, but

I got into the business blind. I didn't have a clue about the industry." At the suggestion of a friend, he got into the business as a manufacturer of venetian blinds. "After so many years, I just went on my own." Working out of his home, he is able to be very cost-competitive. "When I put the price together for any customer, they get a pretty good deal."

**What do you enjoy about this work?** "Meeting the people – people from all walks of life," he says. "It's surprising who you come across and who you meet."



**DOUG BELSEY**  
PRESIDENT  
**TYLER LUCAS & NICOLE YOUNG**  
*Focus Flooring Centre*

**Tell us about your business:** Focus Flooring sells and installs hardwood, laminate and vinyl plank flooring as well as tiles and carpet. "We're known for having an exceptional selection – a lot of stuff that you won't find at another store," says president Doug Belsey. "Some comes out of New York City and I'm the only one in Canada that carries it. Part of the appeal is that we have a very good selection. It's unusual and different."

**What can you do for homeowners?** "We will come out to their home and assist with the selection, measure and give a firm quote," says Doug, who's been in the business for 30 years. "There's no charge or obligation for that. I've worked with a lot of designers and have a lot of experience helping people get these tough choices made. A lot of times, people are struggling making their choices and I've got experience at helping them get through it and get their selections made."

**What do you enjoy about this work?** "I enjoy interior design and putting things together," he says. "It's my hobby as well as my job. Designing brings me a great deal of satisfaction – coming up with all these ideas," he says pointing out his unusual store displays and unique fixtures. "It's not just a store. It's an experience."

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**MATT GIRARD**  
OWNER  
M&J Plumbing

**What services and products do you offer?** M&J Plumbing is a full service plumbing company, providing emergency service and small repair jobs, complete new home and commercial installations, drain cleaning and video camera inspection with locating services. It also provides bathroom renovations, well pumps and water filtration, water heaters and pressure tanks.

**How did you get into this business?** "I had the pleasure of working with other experienced plumbers as well as other contractors in the area when I started out," says Matt. "Working in the GTA, as well as locally in Peterborough County, gave me a

vast knowledge of all different areas of my trade. With hard work and providing good service I have slowly built up my company. With the help of my wife, Jennifer and my exceptional team of employees, it all seemed to just roll into place. I am truly blessed to be surrounded by people who support my efforts and I enjoy the challenge and take satisfaction in the business my team and I have built."

**What's your favourite part of this work?** "Every day is different in the plumbing biz," Matt admits. "One must adapt and overcome whether it be a simple issue or large job – you are always learning and adapting." **OH**

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