

Mountain Homes

highlighting unique homes of the plateau

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A simple mountain retreat... the Cottage at Two Brooks



A quaint mountain cottage retreat at GlenCove

BY CHRISTINE MADDUX
Special to Mountain Homes

Pam Mirner is no stranger to the Highlands-Cashiers plateau, having had a home here since 2008, so she was eager to incorporate the beauty

and simplicity of the mountain lifestyle she and her husband Kevin had come to love into the new cottage they purchased in the GlenCove community in Cashiers.

Photo by Bill Maddux

This cottage in the GlenCove community of Cashiers is owned by Pam and Kevin Mirner. The couple wanted to incorporate the beauty and simplicity of the mountain lifestyle they had come to love.

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Photo by Bill Maddux

Pam Mirner is no stranger to the Highlands-Cashiers plateau, having owned a home here since 2008. She owns the Millstead Boutique in Naples, Fla.

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She found it on Mother's Day weekend in 2019. It was already under construction but there was still time to fine-tune things to suit her vision for their mountain getaway, such as replacing some tile floors with antique pine flooring instead.

The Mirners wanted something smaller and less remote than their previous home in Highlands Cove, to be more compatible with a full lifestyle that includes family, homes and businesses in two other states.

Pam owns the Millstead Boutique in Naples, Fla., where they have a high-rise condominium to lock and leave. Kevin keeps a hand in Harcross Chemicals, the business he sold to his employees in Kansas City, where they enjoy a vintage 1910 home as well as proximity to their two sons, daughter-in-law and granddaughter.

Amid all this, the Mirners' cottage is their relaxed mountain retreat, and living in GlenCove makes it especially easy and inviting for them. The clubhouse is right across the street and will have a restaurant and many other amenities when completed, all in the hallmark style of the developer, Old Edwards Hospitality Group. In the meantime, Kevin enjoys playing the 12-hole golf course and Pam likes to walk the trails and shop the GlenCove weekly grower's market for vegetables, fruits and flowers from the communi-

ty's organic farm and greenhouses.

She also enjoys relaxing in "her spot," a loveseat on the spacious screened porch which extends the living room when the glass window wall between them is folded away. A swing for two and wicker rocking chairs invite other porch-sitters to join her there, surrounded by trees, soothed by the sound of the brook that runs behind the house and warmed by a fireplace on chilly autumn days.

There is a second brook that ambles past the front of the property, leading the Mirners to take a friend's suggestion that they dub their home The Cottage at Two Brooks. They may add steps down to the front creek so they can put their toes in the water, "but that's for next year," Pam said, enjoying a bit of a breather after the lengthy construction process.

The Mirners' house is one of 33 cottages in GlenCove, most of which are still under construction. Built by McMinn Company of Fletcher, it is approximately 3,600 square feet, including four bedrooms and four-and-a-half bathrooms. The Mirners retained the original floor plan, but at the suggestion of their landscaper designated a different door as the main entrance in order to retain more privacy for the southern style front porch. The front door now welcomes guests directly into the living room, awash in natural

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Call 828-743-5101 | Fax 828-743-4173

OUR STAFF:
Publisher: Ryan Hanchett
publisher@highlandsnews.com
Editor: Michael O'Hearn
editor@CrossroadsChronicle.com

Design: Michael O'Hearn and Stephanie Mason
production@highlandsnews.com

Advertising Sales: Marci Sherwood
ads@crossroadschronicle.com

Preparing your garden for spring planting takes work

The final weeks of winter, and even the first few weeks of spring, are still chilly in many parts of the world. Despite those last vestiges of winter chills, late winter is a great time to begin preparing gardens for the coming planting season.

Gardens may have to withstand months of harsh weather each winter, and such conditions can take a toll. Gardeners can consider the following tips as they try to restore their gardens and get them ready for spring planting.

- Disinfect your tools. It's common to clean tools in late fall or whenever they're typically placed in storage for the winter. But cleaning and disinfecting are not necessarily the same thing. If tools were not disinfected at the end of the previous gardening season, disinfect them before doing any work on the garden. Doing so can ensure any lingering bacteria or fungi on tool surfaces are killed prior to the beginning

of gardening season. According to the University of Minnesota Extension, plant pathogens, including bacteria and viruses, can be transferred to and infect plants through bits of soil and plant debris left on shovels and pruner blades. Thoroughly disinfecting such tools prior to using them in the spring is a great way to reduce the risk of disease in your garden.

- Clear debris from garden beds. Leaves, twigs, sticks, and other debris may have gathered in the garden over the winter. Such debris can inhibit the growth of plants and vegetables, so make sure all of it is removed prior to planting. Weeds might even begin to sprout up in late winter and early spring, so remove them before they go to seed.

- Test the soil. Testing the soil prior to planting can help gardeners determine what their gardens will need to thrive in the coming months. Garden centers and home improvement stores sell home



Submitted photo

Gardeners can consider the following tips as they try to restore their gardens and get them ready for spring planting.

testing kits that are effective and easy to use. Once the results are in, speak with a professional at your local garden center about the best time to amend the soil.

- Loosen compacted soil. Soil can become compacted over winter. If compacted soil is not loosened prior to planting, plants will have a hard time getting the water and nutrients they need to thrive. Loosening the soil also

provides another opportunity to inspect the garden for any underlying issues, such as fungi or weed growth, that you may have missed when clearing debris or testing the soil.

Late winter is a good time to assess a garden and address any issues that developed over the winter so plants and vegetables can thrive come the spring planting season.

Children benefit from spending time outdoors

Children who spend a lot of time outdoors benefit from exposure to nature in myriad ways, some of which may surprise even the most devoted outdoorsmen.

According to a 2006 study published in the journal *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, fifth graders who attended school at a local prairie wetlands where lessons in science, math and writing were integrated in an experimental way had significantly stronger reading and writing skills than their peers who attended more traditional schools. Another study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* found that holding a class outdoors one day a week significantly improved the daily cortisol patterns of students, reducing their risk of stress and improving their ability to adapt to stress.

Parents who want their children to reap the rewards of being exposed to the great outdoors can encourage educators

to incorporate nature into school curriculums and also embrace these family-friendly outdoor activities.

- Nature treasure hunt: A treasure hunt in nature can keep kids engaged on family hiking excursions and provide an excellent opportunity for parents to teach children about the assortment of plants, birds and wildlife that live in the parks and along the trails near their home.

- Outdoor art class: Families don't even need to leave their properties to spend quality time together outside. Pick a pleasant afternoon and set up an outdoor painting station, encouraging everyone to paint what they see. Fall is a great time to host an outdoor art sessions thanks to the assortment of vibrant colors that have become synonymous with autumn landscapes.

- Bonfire: Outdoor activities need not be limited to daylight hours. A post-dinner backyard bonfire can entice everyone outside, where families can tell



Submitted photo

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scary stories as they make s'mores.

- Fruit picking: Apple picking is a popular autumn activity, but families need not wait for the autumn harvest to enjoy a day picking fruit or vegetables at a nearby farm. Visit a local farm during its harvest season, teaching children

about how the foods they love are grown and eventually make it to the family dinner table.

Families looking to spend more time together in the great outdoors can look to a number of activities people of all ages can enjoy.

Q + A

with **Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices**
Meadows Mountain Realty
 Broker: Brooks Kittrell

Q. What do you enjoy most about living here?

A. After growing up in Western North Carolina and living anywhere from Asheville to Banner Elk to Highlands, there has always been something that draws me to the mountains, water, and four perfect seasons. The unique thing about Western North Carolina is the vast array of animals, flora and fauna, and terrain. Typically, you can travel under 30 minutes in any direction and find something new.

Q. Why did you choose to work at this firm/company?

A. When I first met Judy and Tricia, I immediately got the impression this firm is different than all the rest. In a field where individuality and setting yourself apart from all the rest is the norm, BHHS MMR is run more like a family and every agent is important. That was important to me.

Q. What makes your job enjoyable?

A. Getting to know people, understanding their challenges, and helping them locate the perfect property. Also getting to explore this amazing area.

Q. What advice do you give to buyers who are new to the area?

A. Let's spend time to determine what makes you tick. We can find a lot of similar homes and/or land for a client, but there is only that one special place that calls to you. That may be gravitating towards a particular river or waterfall, certain system of trails, or even a particular country club. No two people are the same and neither are the homes they choose.



Q. What is the most interesting property or client you have worked with?

A. Both one and the same. I was fortunate enough to partner with Loudermilk Homes in Atlanta to help market and sell a parcel of land in Cashiers consisting of 20 high end custom homes bringing the perfect mix of mountain and modern.

Q. When you're not working, how do you like to spend your time?

A. My wife, Natasha, and I have three boys that keep us on our toes and motivated. When I am not working, I am generally on a sports field somewhere in the area. Other than that youth sports, we spend most of our free time enjoying the outside and exploring. Sundays are almost always family hike day to explore something new.

Q. What is this area's best kept secret?

A. Then it won't be the area's best kept secret. That is the great thing about this area. Almost all families have their own secret spots, and you need to spend time enjoying the area to determine your secret spot. It doesn't take too long to find the one spot that keeps drawing you back.

Q. What's one thing that surprises people about you and why?

A. I am an adrenaline junkie and a product of Generation X. I feel just as comfortable on the soccer field playing with the kids as I do in the skate park in Highlands. I love wakeboarding and snowboarding.

Q. Do you have experience in other fields or professions?

A. Prior to being a real estate broker, I was a golf course superintendent working anywhere from public, resort, to private seasonal golf courses. Most recently, I spent 10 years at Balsam Mountain Preserve in Sylva. It gave me a great insight into the types of people that are attracted to this area and the importance of details within everything.

Saratay Falls is going to be a unique small-scale subdivision. From fly fishing Fowler Creek, to swimming at the base of 44-foot Saratay Falls, or hiking through the dense mountain canopy, this property has it all in a small footprint.

Q. What's your guilty pleasure?

A. Spoonfuls of peanut butter dipped in honey.



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Photo by Bill Maddux

The Mirners' cottage is their relaxed mountain retreat, and living in GlenCove makes it especially easy and inviting for them.



Photo by Bill Maddux

The cottage interior was designed by Frances Carruthers, owner of Cricket Box in Ocala, Fla. She and Pam became acquainted through Judy Brown of Bounds Cave Rug Gallery.



Photo by Bill Maddux

The cottage has a spacious screen porch which extends the living room when the glass window wall between them is folded away.



Photo by Bill Maddux

The cottage is approximately 3,600 square feet, including four bedrooms and four-and-a-half bathrooms.

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light, centered on a brick fireplace, and anchoring an open floor plan.

The cottage interior was designed by Frances Carruthers, owner of the Cricket Box in Ocala, Fla. She and Pam became acquainted through Judy Brown of Bounds Cave Rug Gallery in Cashiers, where Pam has shopped over the years and where she chose several rugs for the cottage. Carruthers had assisted Pam with their two other homes as well. For this residence, she focused on colors and furnishings that echo the area's serene natural beauty.

"I love the way Frances brought the outdoors inside," Pam said, referring to the subtle animal motif in wallpa-

per, draperies, pillows, and artwork, incorporating birds, squirrels, ladybugs and other flora and fauna into the design.

Much of the artwork is from the Haen Gallery in Asheville. The Mirners' seven-year-old granddaughter was allowed to choose the art for the second story guestroom she calls hers.

"I was kind of thinking that horses would be nice", said doting grandmother Pam, "but she chose bunnies, so bunnies it is."

There are two additional guestrooms with bathrooms en suite on the second floor, which also includes another of the Mirners' favorite spaces, the media room. It offers ample, com-

fortable seating and a big-screen TV, which Pam said makes the room conducive to settling in for a casual dinner and a favorite PBS show.

One of the guest rooms features an antique bureau with handsome curves.

"It's the first piece we chose for the cottage," Pam said, "the one that started it all."

She chose other select antiques as well, including the oval table in the kitchen.

"From the picture, I didn't think I'd like it," Pam said. "But Frances encouraged me to 'just live with it and see', and now I absolutely love it, especially with the chairs we chose and the built-in bench. We haven't entertained here a lot yet, but the table holds six of

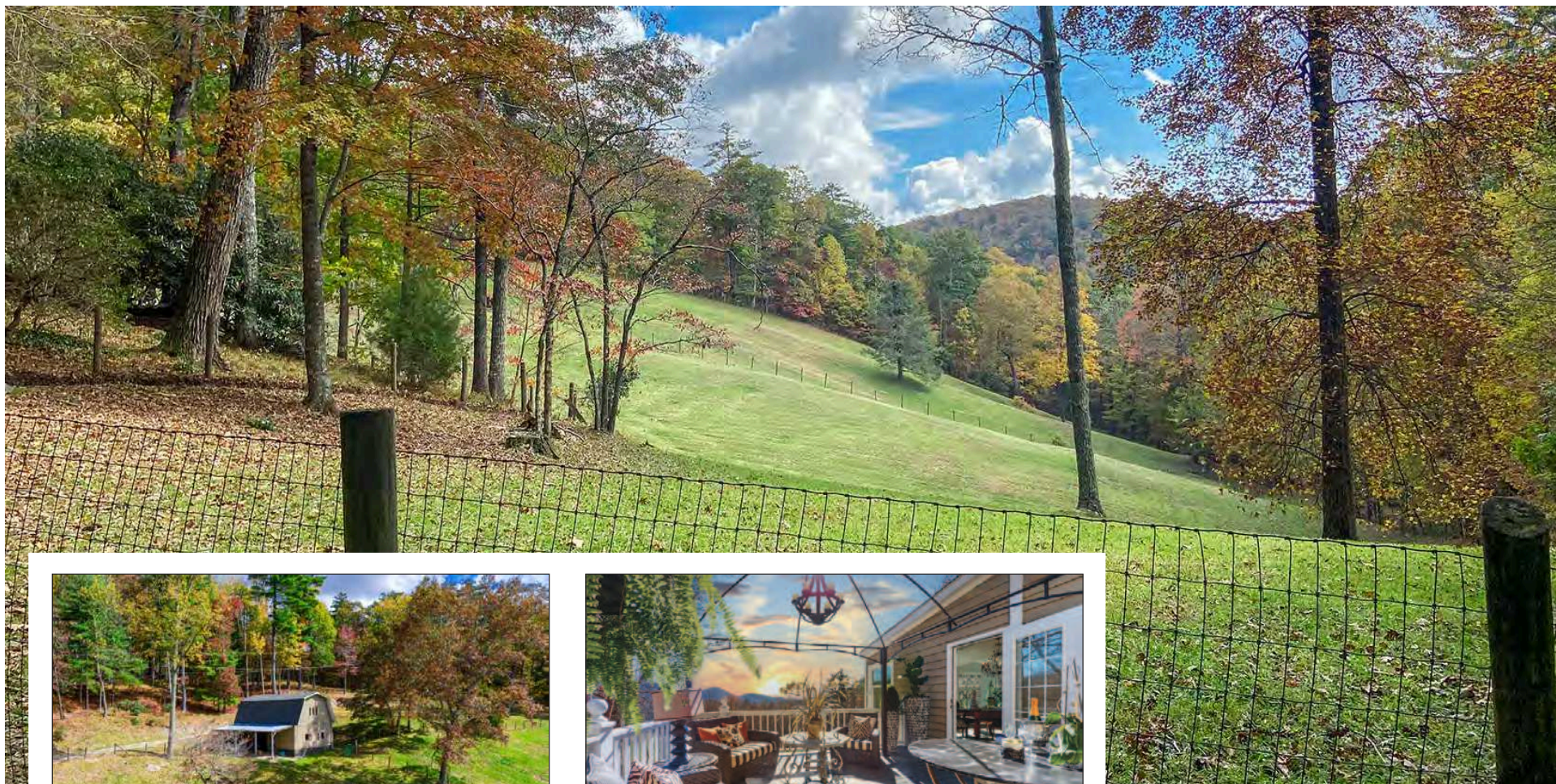
us nicely."

There is also seating at the adjacent breakfast bar. The master bedroom suite and laundry room complete the main floor, off an airy hallway warmed by weathered brick underfoot.

A carriage house suite above the garage is still a work in progress, but it already holds furnishings intended to charm their granddaughter, including a feminine daybed with a trundle option for a chum.

"Who knows? If we have a houseful sometime, I may escape out here myself for some peace and quiet," said Pam.

After all, that's what The Cottage at Two Brooks is all about.



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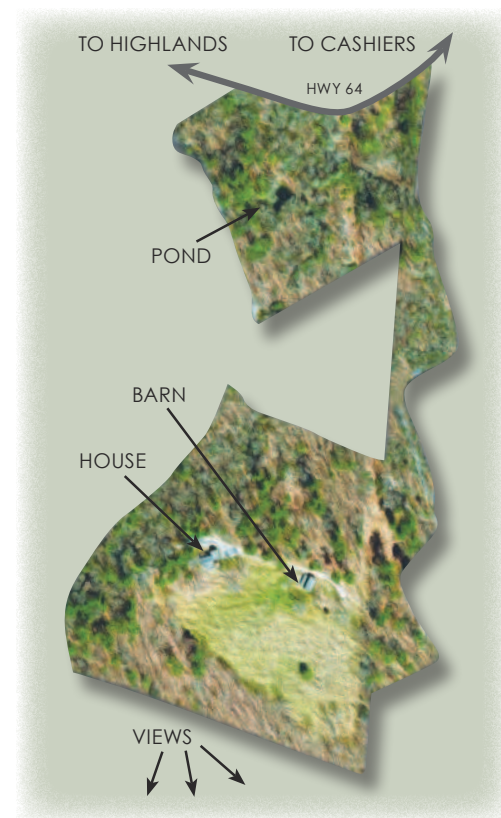
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The Highlander

Fall season makes a great time for home projects

Fall is a great time to tackle projects around the house. The weather each fall allows homeowners to make improvements to their homes' exteriors without worrying about extreme heat or cold, while interior projects like painting are made easier because homeowners can open the windows to allow for proper ventilation.

Fall also marks a great time to prepare for upcoming projects that can make winter work that much easier. For example, fall is a great time to take stock of your gutters so you can address any issues before leaves begin to fall or the first snowstorm touches down.

Compromised gutters can contribute to water issues in basements and adversely affect a home's foundation if not addressed immediately, so it behooves homeowners to learn the signs that gutters are in need of repair or replacement.

• **Gutters hanging off the home:** Gutters were once installed predominantly with spikes. However, many industry professionals now

install gutters with hanger brackets. Why the change? Spikes loosen over time, leading to the gutters hanging off the home. That can contribute to serious issues if left untreated. Gutters hanging off the home need not necessarily be replaced, but rather secured to the home, ideally with hanger brackets instead of spikes. Brackets hook into the front of the gutter and are then screwed into the fascia of a home. A professional who specializes in gutter repair can perform this task relatively quickly, and it's an inexpensive yet highly effective solution.

• **Gutter separation:** Gutters that are no longer fastened together can leak and contribute to issues that affect the home's foundation, siding and appearance. Clogs and the accumulation of debris can cause gutters to separate because they are not designed to hold too much weight. Replacement of separated gutters may or may not be necessary depending on how big the problem is and the condition of

the existing gutters. If replacement is not necessary, separated gutters may be remedied by securing the joints, another relatively simple and inexpensive fix.

• **Peeling exterior paint:** Paint that appears to be peeling off of your home may indicate that water is seeping over the edge of the gutter closest to your home. When that happens, water is coming down the side of the house, causing the paint to peel. In such instances, replacing the gutters is often necessary.

• **Basement flooding:** Not all signs of deteriorating gutters are outside a home. Many a homeowner has been flummoxed by flooding in their basements, and such flooding can be caused by aging, ineffective gutters. That's because deteriorating gutters sometimes allow water to leak near the foundation of a home, contributing to basement flooding.

Fall is an ideal time to inspect gutters and have any issues fixed before leaves begin to fall or harsh winter weather arrives.



Submitted photo

It behooves homeowners to learn the signs that gutters are in need of repair or replacement.

Brush up on fireplace facts before colder weather strikes

A warm fire can make even the coldest winter day more enjoyable. Fireplaces may not get much use in spring or summer, but come late fall and throughout the winter, the fireplace can be a great place for families to gather.

Before fireplace season hits full swing, homeowners might want to brush up on a few fireplace facts so they can safely enjoy nights spent sitting by the crackling flames.

The Chimney Safety Institute of America advises homeowners with fireplaces to hire a CSIA-certified chimney sweep to clean their fireplaces. After a lengthy period of non-use, various issues could be affecting the chimney, many of which might not be noticeable to an untrained eye. Professional, certified chimney sweeps have extensive

knowledge of fireplaces, making them valuable resources who can let homeowners know if any safety issues developed since fireplaces were last used. The National Protection Agency recommends that chimneys be swept at least once per year.

A full inspection of the chimney might be in order as well. Chimney service technicians will conduct thorough examinations of readily accessible portions of the chimney exterior and interior and accessible portions of the appliance and the chimney connection.

The CSIA recommends that homeowners who plan to use their chimneys as they have in the past request a Level 1 inspection, which will examine the soundness of the chimney structure and flue as well as the basic appliance installation and

connections. Technicians also will verify if the chimney is free of obstruction and combustible deposits.

Homeowners also should inspect their chimney dampers before lighting their first fires of the season. Dampers should open and close smoothly. If not, a service technician can help fix or replace the damper.

Firewood is another thing homeowners must consider before lighting their first fires of the season. The CSIA says that well-seasoned firewood works best, noting that wood that is not well-seasoned will produce more smoke than heat.

In addition, the home improvement resource This Old House recommends using dense wood that's been split and stored in a high and dry place for at least six months. Oak is an example of dense wood that,

when stored properly, can make for an enjoyable fireplace experience.

Avoid softwoods like pine. Pine can produce a lot of creosote, which is a byproduct of wood combustion. Creosote is highly flammable, and as it builds up in a chimney, the risk for a chimney fire increases. Choosing the right wood, making sure it's well-seasoned and having a chimney professionally cleaned can reduce the risk of a creosote-related chimney fire. A Level 1 inspection should determine if there are potentially dangerous levels of creosote deposits in the chimney.

Before nestling up to a fireplace this winter, homeowners should consider a host of factors and safety measures to ensure their fireplaces are safe and ready for the season ahead.

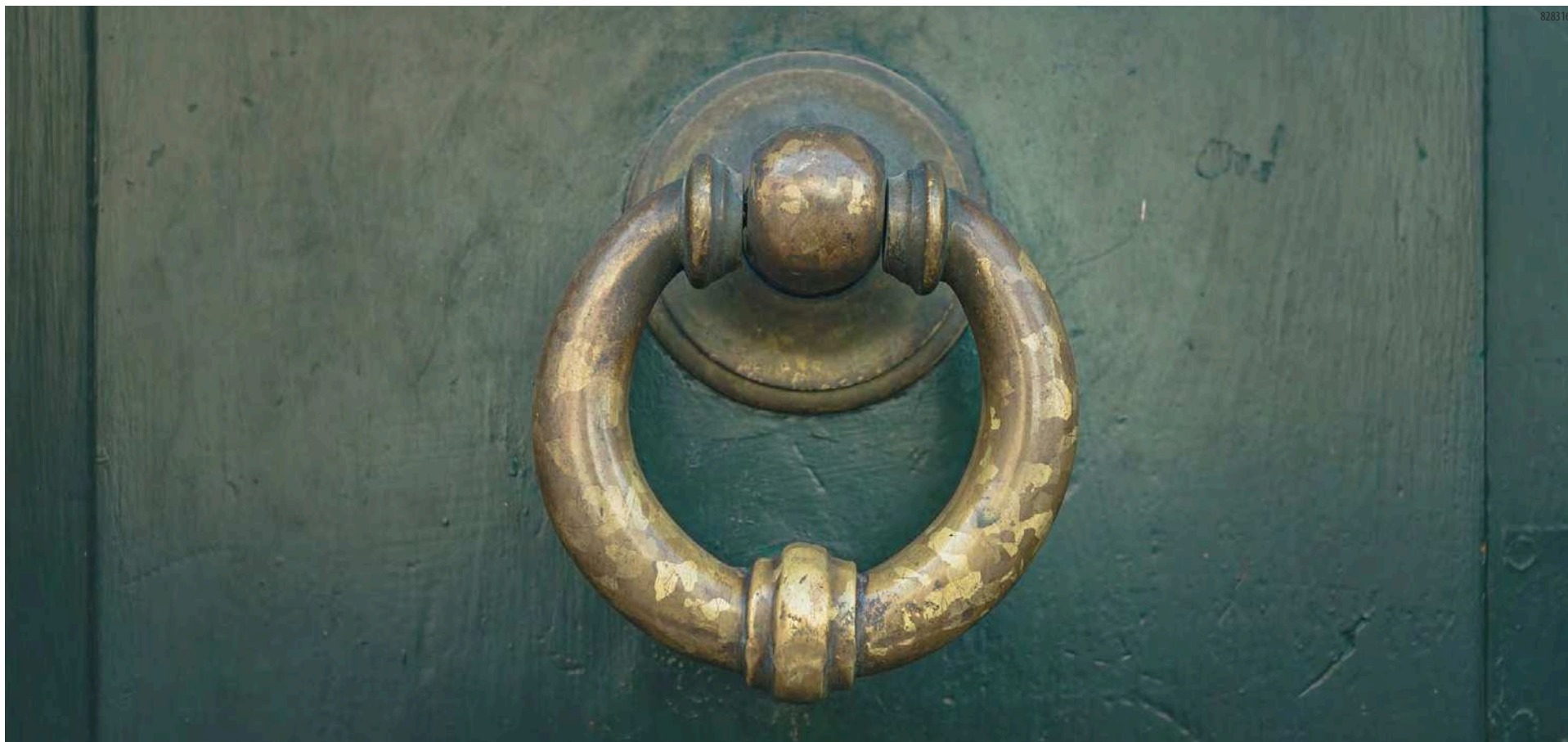


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