

BEST INTERIOR DESIGNER

Embellishments Design Studio

Jane-Marie Bloomberg jokes that she's a recovering accountant. The interior designer opened Embellishments Design Studio (612.251.6512; embellishmentsdesign.com) in May of 2002, after leaving corporate America to pursue her passion for design. But that doesn't mean she doesn't use her accounting skills on a daily basis: With a keen eye for her clients' budgets, Bloomberg is able to cultivate the perfect look for a home without breaking the bank. She describes her style as classic modern, explaining that she's drawn to items with good bones and great lines with a twist that makes them current. "There's room for good design, regardless of price point and budget," she says. —LP

Runners up: Molly Gilbertson, M. Gilbertson Design; Chantal Devane, Devane Design

BEST INDEPENDENT PLACE TO BUY JEANS

Hot Mama

Shopping for a new pair of jeans is right up there with picking out a new swim suit, but finding the right fit is even more crucial considering that the perfect pair is a staple of any woman's wardrobe. Feeling pressured and overwhelmed? Enter Hot Mama (11995 Singletree Lane, Eden Prairie; 952.426.0066; shopmama.com).

The shop's stylists are skilled at listening to their shoppers' needs, sizing up their body types and helping them find a pair they feel great about, says store manager Erin Wills. Hot Mama carries about 10 different brands of premium denim in a variety of styles and price points, ranging from \$79 to \$198. "We have all sizes," Wills says. "We want to get the perfect jeans on whatever body you have." —LP

Runners up: Mainstream Boutique, The Hanger

BEST TOY STORE

ABC Toy Zone

Packed to the gills with everything from trendy collectibles to educational, family-friendly games, it's no surprise that adults and children alike are fans of ABC Toy Zone (820 W. 78th St., Chanhassen; 952.474.4366; abctoyzone.com). The locally owned chain of stores does its best to carry local products, and it's well-stocked with teacher-friendly materials, as well. —LP

Runners up: Smarty Pants Kids, Target

BEST REAL ESTATE AGENT

Colleen Larson, Re/Max Results

Eden Prairie

With more than 20 years of experience in both mortgages and real estate, Colleen Larson (952.829.3832; results.net/colleen.larson) has helped a lot of people buy and sell homes. "I love my job," Larson says. "I really end up becoming friends with the people I work with."

Larson's mother was a real estate agent, which piqued Larson's interest in the field at a young age. She loves helping her clients every step of the way from beginning their search or staging their home to negotiating the deal and finally, bringing the transaction to a close. —LP

Runners up: Linda Margl, Edina Realty; Bloomberg Real Estate Services

BEST LANDSCAPER

The Mustard Seed

The past year has marked a homecoming of sorts for Mark Halla, owner of The Mustard Seed. He purchased his family business, Halla Nursery and Garden Center, last November, and this spring he opened another location of The Mustard Seed where Halla Nursery used to sit (10000 Great Plains Blvd., Chaska; 952.361.9954; themustardseedinc.com). The garden shop and landscaping center is still open in its original location (6055 Hwy. 12, Chaska). And it still offers the same beautiful landscaping services, providing customers with design options, installation and even perennial garden maintenance. As the company continues to grow into its new spaces, its services may expand, too. —LP

Runners up: Bachman's, Southview Design



BEST BUILDER/REMODELER

Mackmiller Design+Build

The husband and wife team, Mark and Mary Mackmiller, behind Mackmiller Design+Build (15694 Village Woods Drive, Eden Prairie; 952.949.8600; mackmiller.com)

excel at making spaces that are not only beautiful, but liveable—a perfect marriage of form and function. "Both Mark and I really love solving people's living, spatial and design problems," Mary says. The couple takes pride in creating designs that reflect their clients' personal tastes, which means each of their projects has a unique feel. —LP

Runners up: CRE Construction, Iron River Construction

BEST FLORIST

Bachman's

"How can you not love working with beautiful flowers," says Cheri Paulson, a floral designer at Bachman's for the past 12 years. Paulson, and the team of florists at Bachman's in Eden Prairie (770 Prairie Center Dr., Eden Prairie; 952.941.7700; bachmans.com), including Linda Quick, Tammy Marquardt-Pieper and Jenny Hindbjorgen, pride themselves on making unique bouquets to mark all of life's big moments, from marriage proposals to funerals. "It's nice to know what you're doing is affecting people's lives in a positive way," Paulson says. —LP

Runners up: Victoria Rose Floral, Belladonna Florist

BEST COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

Chanhassen Fourth of July

There are summer festivals, and then there's the Fourth of July in Chanhassen (7700 Market Blvd., Chanhassen; ci.chanhassen.mn.us). No other holiday or event can compare to the spectacle of explosions in the sky and the best birthday party around. The Chanhassen 4th of July celebration is celebrating its 30th year of honoring the formation of our nation. "It's small town living at its finest," says recreation supervisor Mitch Johnson. What started as a simple celebration at Lake Ann has grown into a three-day festival that attracts up to 8,000 people per day. Expect live music, a carnival, a parade and much more—this event gets bigger every year. Join in the fun starting July 2; —JM

Runners up: Victoria's Volksfest, Waconia's Nickle Dickle Day

