



Be astonished

Dear Di: Well, I thought about your column "Flirting with life," and I sort of realized I may be doing anything but that. Here's what I mean. I went to a magic show at the Oconee Community Theatre in mid-January. The magician was



DIGGING IN WITH DI

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Howard Blackwell. He called himself a mentalist and illusionist, and I got real curious and wanted to see what he was all about.

He went from eating needles to doing card tricks

and reading minds. It was totally mind-blowing! But instead of getting caught in the magic, I found myself trying to catch the magician cheating at the game. In other words, my mind could not allow the mystery to unfold. I kept looking for ways to prove that what he was doing was fake. His assistant was in the back of the room, and I kept watching him, waiting for him to be sending some secret signal to Mr. Blackwell so he could fool the audience.

I mean, why go to a magic show if you don't want to see magic? I kind of spoiled it for myself, and my wife, because I kept whispering my suspicions in her ear. Very annoying, for sure!

I think I need to start flirting with life more, don't you?

— **Disillusioned**

Dear Disillusioned: It sounds like your rational mind wanted to be in the driver's seat instead of allowing you to sit back and nestle into an evening of enchantment. I love that reading the column on "Flirting with life" brought you the awareness about what you were doing with all that magic.

Eugene Ionesco said, "Explanation separates us from astonishment."

When we experience something that challenges our rational mind and belief system, it certainly can set up some resistance. To immerse ourselves in the magic spell, we must let go of what we know and enter in with an almost childlike curiosity. Instead of looking for a reason or mechanism of action behind the curtain, we need to just go with it and see where it leads.

With all that is unfolding in our world the last couple of years, I think we could all use more mental vacations, surround ourselves with nature, be with friends who make us laugh, play games that are just for fun, and observe children more. They have so much to teach us in their innocence and spontaneity.

Thank you for bringing this to our attention — a wonderful reminder to stay in the magic of the moments we are given instead of dissecting them into parts and pieces.

Get out there and flirt with life.

— **Di**

DI UCCI LIVES in West Union. She is a registered nurse with a master's in education and a 45-year career in human services. You can send your questions, concerns and life challenges to her at diucciauthor@gmail.com. If you'd prefer to write a letter to Di — anonymously or with your name — feel free to send a letter to The Journal's mailing address (210 W. North 1st St., Seneca, SC 29678).



CALEB GILBERT | THE JOURNAL

Pictured, from left, are HMC employees Kevin Murphy, Daniel Batchelder, Andrew Belford, Chad Sears, Adam Jones, Tara Burke, George Smith, Melanie Harbin and Daniel English.

All about gutters

Local general contractor specializes in gutter services

BY LAUREN PIERCE
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — HMC Builders has served the community as a general contractor in the construction business for 24 years — but many might not know they have a full-service gutter division.

Specializing in "all things gutter" for residential and commercial, HMC Builders in Seneca offers 5- and 6-inch K-style, 6-inch half round, commercial box, steel and custom-sized seamless gutters — with 32 colors to choose from.

The team also does gutter guards and cleaning services or really "anything you can imagine," as HMC president Adam Jones likes to say.

Jones has done remodeling and construction work for 20-plus years, along with some experience in roofing, though he's no longer in the roofing business.

"With roofing, we did a lot of gutters," he said. "The guys in the area that I was working with to do the gutters for me were not doing a very good job, so I started buying machines. More than 15 years ago, we started getting gutter machines in, and we've been running gutters ever since. It has evolved into multiple trucks. We'll soon have three box trucks running — three crews running all over the Upstate."

Though it might seem like run-of-the-mill work with gutters being just a small piece of a house or business, they are vital in controlling water runoff from a home or business. Gutters also help prevent erosion around a building, water intrusion inside and water damage to the foundation or floor framing.

HMC sales manager Tara Burke said she enjoys being out in the field, because many people don't consider how important gutters are.

"I've seen water do thousands of dollars in damage, so it's kind of fun to educate clients and help them out," she said. "Sometimes they have water in their crawl spaces, and they can't connect it coming from your gutter. ... We're all homeowners, and it's important for people to protect their investments. It's a small thing in the beginning, but it can save them thousands in the end. ... Whether it's a small job or a big job, we handle them all the same."

CONSTRUCTION WORK

Besides gutters, HMC Builders does a lot of construction work — whether it's new construction or existing repairs or rehabs.

Residential services include conducting home inspection repairs, structural repairs like soffit and fascia, rot repair associated with gutters and a few others.

On the commercial side, the business offers a range of building services, specializing in store buildouts, breweries and restaurants. HMC Builders recently completed a renovation project with Solé Grill and Sushi Bar in Seneca.

"We provided all of the structure of the patio, heaters and lights and fans and all that kind of good stuff," Jones said. "We also did the rehab inside and changing the building around."



SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

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'THAT'S JUST WHAT WE DO'

One of the best parts of the business is that they don't sub out any of their work, Burke said.

"All of our employees are in house. Our employees, you can always get somebody on the phone," she said. "We stand behind our work. We'll come back out and fix the smallest leak, because that's just what we do."

Burke said HMC "cares more than the average company," setting them apart from others.

"Our reputation is big to us and well known, and that's important to us," she said. "We're not just a fly-by-night kind of crew. We also take a lot of projects that other guys won't, so we're the company that other companies call. ... We're known for the unique situations; we're known for getting people out of problems."

While HMC strives to help clients themselves, the team isn't afraid to suggest another business to meet people's needs. Burke said they're still willing to help even if a project is not something they can do.

"We have no problem steering our clients down the right path," she said. "I think that's what sets us apart as well is even if we're not the right fit, we'll be honest and we'll put you in good hands. I think we genuinely enjoy that. A lot of people are in it for the money in that, and I think we're in it more to just really honestly make a difference."

Along with its quality customer service, HMC uses top-tier products. The company offers warranties on new products and guarantees the service provided because the team takes an interest in "the quality of the work," office manager Melanie Harbin said.

"If there's ever a warranty call back, our guys care. You know, what did we do that we can fix next time where this isn't going to happen again?" she said. "We're going to go out and fix whatever that is and make sure that our clients know that they're taken care of, and that we are providing quality materials and workmanship."



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HELPING 'MISS RUBY'

HMC Builders have helped numerous people throughout the Upstate area, including charitable work donating gutters to Habitat for Humanity.

But there's one person in particular who has captured the hearts of the team.

Nestled right in between the business and the office building is "Miss Ruby," said Jones.

"My guys have taken it upon themselves to do some volunteer work for our neighbor, Miss Ruby," he said. "She's in her 80s. They go over and make sure her house works and clean her gutters periodically. Everybody digs Miss Ruby."