



Mike Vitli has expanded HouseTalk's horizons from radio to cable TV.

JIM JAGDFELD/staff photographer

Radio talk show host tries cable

By Doug Funke
staff writer

Mike Vitli and Gloria Gavle are trying to plow new ground as host and producer/director of a cable TV show about home construction and improvements.

The show, HouseTalk, debuted on Dearborn Cablevision in late November. Vitli and Gavle believe that their program is the only one of its kind locally produced for Detroit-area cable TV systems.

HouseTalk has been picked up by Omnicom, which services Plymouth, Canton and Northville Cablevision (Wayne) and Greater Media, which serves West Lake, Commerce and Wixom, Gavle said.

The pair are talking with Metrovision about getting the program aired in Livonia and Redford.

HouseTalk is an offshoot of a radio talk show of the same name hosted by Vitli 11 a.m. to noon Thursdays on WCAR (1090) in Garden City.

"WE TALK about what's here now but take it further - what's coming in the next few years," said Vitli, 41, a Dearborn resident.

Vitli doesn't think of himself as an expert on building but figures that's a plus rather than a minus.

"What I'm asking is on the public's minds," he said. "I have a natural curiosity. I'm learning as I go."

The radio and TV shows raise issues like what's new in technology, how to find a contractor, insurance, mortgages and decorating tips.

Sonja Johns of Warren will join Vitli as co-host of the TV version after the first of the year.

Vitli is impressed with amenities now available like home security systems and radon monitors.

Other Vitli observations:

• "Window technology is incredible. It's more than just looking out of a pane of glass.

• "Pretty soon, our houses will be wired. You will communicate with the home and your home will communicate with you.

• "More and more people are building their own homes. The reason owner-built is catching on is so much information is available."

There's a lot of bantering and small talk with guests on the radio show.

"Being entertaining, we find we're attracting people who normally don't listen to this kind of show," Vitli said. "They were learning in spite of themselves."

Vitli started the radio show about three years ago when he was persuaded by his ex-wife to do an actual informational show rather than creative spots for advertising clients.

THE TV show, which airs on local access channels, features in-studio interviews and field segments, Vitli said.

"It's a cross between This Old House (PBS) and the Tonight Show," he cracked.

Gavle, Vitli's producer/director, lines up guests and generally tends to the odds and ends that go into putting a show together. She learned production techniques through classes offered by Metrovision.

There are a couple of other Observer-area connections to the HouseTalk cable TV show.

Image Enhancement, a fledgling video production company in Canton owned by Brad Hayes and Bill Spurlin II, does the technical work.

And Phil Santeo and Pat Arwood, owners of Kitchen Kraft in Redford, allow taping of the "studio" segment on a set in their shop.

Bathroom safety often overlooked

(AP) — Though usually among the smallest rooms in the house, the bathroom can be a source of great danger from falls, electric shock, poisoning or scalding.

Here are some bathroom safety tips:

• Provide good lighting. The easiest way to avoid hazards is to be able to see them.

• Prevent falls by using only scatter rugs or carpeting with non-skid backing. Use adhesive decals or rubber mats with suction backs inside the tub and shower. Don't depend on built-in rough patches in the bottom of the tub or shower.

• Install grab bars in the tub or shower and next to the toilet, especially for an elderly or handicapped resident. Keep in mind that grab bars must be attached securely enough to withstand a person's entire weight. Make sure grab bars on the tub edge are fastened tightly. Attach wall grab bars in the wall.

• Be certain any tub or shower enclosure is shatterproof. Before installing an enclosure, check with your supplier about products with the American National Standard Institute's V-97 certification.

• Water conducts electricity. Exercise extreme caution when using electricity in the bathroom.

• Portable electric space heaters, radios and tape players are risky in a wet environment. Don't use them in the bathroom. If someone insists on listening to music or news there, get a battery-operated model.

• Don't operate light switches, or use shavers or hair dryers when your feet or hands are wet. Try to get into the habit of drying your hair in the bedroom.

Unplug appliances as soon as you finish using them. Some older appliances have cords that detach from the appliance as well as the wall. Unplug such a cord from the wall outlet first. If you unplug the appliance first, the dangling cord could cause severe shock if it drops into water.

When buying new appliances, get a rechargeable model if possible.

If your bathroom doesn't already have them, install GFI's (ground fault interrupters) to prevent the possibility of fatal shock. A GFI is a highly sensitive device that cuts off power in a fraction of a second when it detects any leakage of electricity — well before the current flow can harm you. GFI's can replace individual outlets, or an electrician can install one in a circuit breaker panel to protect an entire circuit. A portable GFI plugs into a standard three-prong wall receptacle.

• Avoid creating hazards that can poison you or your family.

If you have young children around, keep prescription drugs and other medications out of the bathroom cabinet or equip the cabinet with a lock and store cleaning products in an inaccessible or locked place.

Don't mix any combination of bleach, ammonia and cleaners in the toilet bowl because a toxic gas will result. If you are using two substances, flush away one before pouring in the other. Remove a commercial in-the-tank cleaner before using another cleaner.

• If your shower douses you with hot water

when another tap is turned on or the toilet is flushed, consider having a plumber install a mixing valve with a built-in temperature and pressure regulator.

To prevent scalding and to save energy, set the water heater thermostat to no more than 140 degrees (120 degrees if you don't have a dishwasher).

Make sure that the lock on the bathroom door can be opened from the outside. If it can't, install a lockset with an external lock release. On these, a hole in the knob usually accepts a wire or other probe, which pops open the button on the internal knob.

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