

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

'Smart' fridge checks prices, gets recipes, tips

There's been a lot of attention focused on home appliances of the future. Predictions of how appliances will work, and do things differently than they do today, are at the point of being a little silly. I remember back in 1975 when a manufacturer predicted that microwave ovens would be used for telecommunications, and as a cooking appliance. Most of us are still using the microwave the same way we were back then. Like many of you, I read the recent story about the refrigerator that will turn into a kitchen range at the flick of a switch. It makes me wonder where they are going to store ice cream in this unit. It's hard for this white haired old man to accept these new concepts but I must admit they are coming true.

Smart refrigerator

Take the case of a producer of refrigerators from Seoul, Korea who has introduced the product of tomorrow. Let me quote a piece from a trade publication called Professional Service Association News.

"The manufacturer has pioneered and continues to lead the industry in developing cutting-edge digital home appliances. Their vision is to create appliances that go beyond a simple mechanical function, like heating food or keeping it cold. Instead, these next-generation appliances will perform greater tasks, such as collecting recipes, preparing meals and keeping pantries stocked - tasks that require intelligence. They will be interconnected via the Internet and work together to become our assistant homemakers."

Now folks, I don't want anyone to think this column is an April fool's joke because this refrigerator is already set for distribution and purchase by the end of the year. I mean you will be able to buy one for your home by the end of 2002. Imagine, a 26-cubic-foot refrigerator that can check real-time price information on groceries, obtain tips on food, nutrition and recipes, be reminded of scheduled events, when to change the water filter and learn cooking methods for products stored inside.

Consumers will be able to use this new Internet-connected refrigerator as a television, radio, videophone, bulletin board, calendar and digital camera. I personally find it hard to believe all that I am writing today but you can count on it being true.

Healthy suggestion

If I were able to make a suggestion to this company, I would ask them to put a spot on the front door a person can stick their finger into to get an instant read-out on blood pressure and pulse. That feature would save a few lives and prevent strokes. I keep telling myself as I'm writing, "don't say anything Joe, keep your dry sense of humor to yourself."

Think about it folks - new technology can change so many things. A home will cost a lot less in the future. You will have three bedrooms and one gigantic room called a kitvildin and forget the rest. Will this country go for this new refrigerator is the big question, and only time will take care of the answer. I'll let you know just as soon as I find out how much this refrigerator is going to cost. That could have a bearing on its success.

Stay tuned.

Joe Gagnon can be heard Saturday and Sunday on 760 WJR. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His phone number is (313) 873-9789.

Bridge to the world



Rosie Hutchinson gets a little help from her granddaughter Bianca Ross down her new wheelchair ramp built by Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency.

STAFF PHOTO BY TON HOFFMEYER

Ramp program is blessing for those with disabilities

Five years ago, Rosie Hutchinson's family planted spring flowers in front of her home. She didn't go out to see them.

Four years ago, they planted spring flowers. She didn't go out to see them. Three years ago, Two years ago. And last year.

This year, Hutchinson will go out to see the new flowers. This year, she's determined to help plant them.

This year, you see, for the first time since illness and disabilities locked her into a wheelchair, the 63-year-old grandma will roll past the barricading front steps that had barred flowers, fresh air, roller-skating grandchildren, and waves to new neighbors.

This spring, Hutchinson's chair, rather than continuing to confine her, will glide down the ramp just built at her front door. It will take her into a world she hasn't seen all these years.

She'll see the front of her house, the same color as five years ago, but probably in need of painting, she said.

She'll see families who have moved in, she'll see the sidewalk where the kids play, and she'll see the flower beds filled in times past with plants she could only enjoy in photos the family brought in for her.

"I missed a whole lot," said the long-divorced mother of five and grandma of 16.

Her first time out, helped only as far as the head of the new ramp by one of her granddaughters, the world opened to her. "Oh, I loved it. I smelled the fresh air."

Soon, she'll make the ride down the ramp. One goal: The flower beds.

"With their help, I can just bend down and plant."

'Overwhelming need'

With the freedom the ramp promises, Hutchinson recognizes responsibility, as well, especially for the safety of the children who constantly visit. She's told them, "No roller skates on my ramp. They can walk down, but no skates, no bikes. They started to, but I stopped them."

Hutchinson, of Pontiac, had been stopped from going to church, at New Springfield Baptist, and is eager to rejoin her friends there. For anyone wondering how she got to the doctor all this time, she explains that she's fortunate to have a doctor who makes housecalls.

Please see RAMPs, C2

By Norman Prady ♦ Special Writer

File mail right away in designated 'homes'

Q: I do not know how all the mail we receive each day. I never know where to put everything, so it usually ends up stacked on the kitchen counter.



Diana Koenig

A: It will be easier to deal with the mail if you create a home for each paper before it enters your house. Anticipate the kind of mail you receive and create a place for these papers ahead of time. Some mail you will not be able to foresee, so you will need to make a file for these items after they arrive at your house.

If you receive an abundance of unwanted mail then call or write organizations and ask for your name to be deleted from their mailing list.

Homes for the Mail

Bills - Make sure there is a specific home for the bills, such as a specific box labeled "bill box" or file folder. The location should be in a place that you would look at often so you remember to pay the bills on time.

Spouse's mail - Assign a basket for your spouse's mail. Ask him to deal with it immediately or before the basket overflows.

Children's mail - Place their mail in their room on a desk, dresser, or designated basket.

Junk mail - Immediately place these papers in the trash

can.

Coupons - Use a divided container to store coupons. Index cards work well to label the coupon categories. Suggested categories are: Services, food, restaurants, entertainment, car, and home improvements/repairs.

Magazines, newsletters, and other reading materials - Place these items in a container or canvas bag. If you have trouble finding time to read at home, take your reading material with you in the car to read while you wait at appointments, car pool lines, etc.

Charitable organizations - Create a folder to keep information from an organization you would like to support. If you do not plan to contribute a donation, discard the letter.

Tax information - Store this

information in a labeled file folder. When it is time to do your taxes, you will not have to hunt for the necessary papers because you will have them organized in one folder.

Invitations - Write the date on your calendar and then place the invitation on the refrigerator, file folder, or accessible drawer. After the event either discard or file the invitation so you do not clutter your refrigerator or drawer with unnecessary information.

Cards, letters, announcements - Designate a keepsake box for items you want to save. You may choose to save some of these memorabilia for only a few days.

Voter cards - This is your reminder to vote. Put it in a visible place until after the election.

Catalogues - Only save the

catalogs you intend to order products from. Put them in a container or file folder. Discard the old catalog when you receive a new one.

It is important to deal with the mail immediately when you bring it into your house. Files of homeless papers are an overwhelming task to deal with. If you have been on vacation, you will need to designate extra time to sort through the stacks of mail.

Today's Refrigerator Bulletin - "Avoid a paper trail by immediately finding a home for each piece of mail!"

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