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Plan the Weekend

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Interiors and Exteriors

The Electronic Maid

When you drove out here this weekend, stuck in the mire of traffic on Route. 27, were you thinking about needing the air conditioning turned on, or how you wish you'd left the front lights on, or maybe you'd like the pool all nicely heated for your arrival? A new web site called **Connected Hearth.com** allows its customers to control their homes from the web, running everything from security systems to making a pot of coffee. With this new system, customers can flip open their palm pilots and, with a few quick motions, prepare their home for arrival.

The web site was launched July 1 and is said to be in high demand. Cameras and control systems are installed throughout the home so that customers can check on their homes online and control any number of appliances throughout the house, depending on their specifications. Even the Jacuzzi and espresso machine can be used via the web site, so that when you get home, you have a cup of espresso and a bubbly tub awaiting you. It is the ultimate luxury, akin to having your very own maid.

The service will notify customers via email of any problems such as "unauthorized entry, fire, water leaks, and low temperature," which would be especially valuable through the winter months when beach houses are empty but need monitoring and occasional tending. And it offers peace of mind to those who absentmindedly leave the coffee pot or the stove burner on. With Connected Hearth, you can log on and check to see that everything is in order and turn the appliances off and on. You no longer have to wonder, as you head back to the city on Sunday, whether or not you left the upstairs lights on, or if you remembered to set the alarm.

The web site is said to be very secure, using the same encryption that banks use for their online services. The equipment installed in the home is a "complete home automation system controlled in-home via wall-

mounted touchscreen consoles.” It all sounds a bit Jetson’s, very new age, but the convenience and peace of mind the system offers is appealing, and for those with multiple homes, it is surely a time-saver.

–Rachel May

Connected Hearth is found on the web at www.connectedhearth.com, or at 1-800-575-3479.

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