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TRENDS IN DECORATING

Medicinal makeover

Free service aims to make home a healing place

CONNIE ADAIR

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Annie Ryes walked downstairs, saw a man painting her living room walls, and burst into tears.

"I was so excited. I looked at the paint and couldn't believe it was so nice. It was bright and it set the mood," says Ryes.

Ever since she'd started chemotherapy, Ryes had become sensitive to colours. Staring at dark and depressing walls for hours at a time was getting her down. That's when Ryes' sister, Arcilen, heard about Havens for Healing, a complimentary service offered by members of the Canadian ReDesigners Association (CRDA) to women with ovarian cancer.

"The living room colour was really bothering Annie," says CRDA president and Havens for Healing co-chair Cyrese Samuel, the lead on the team of volunteers who worked on Ryes' Brampton, Ontario, home. "Even though we don't offer painting as part of Havens for Healing, I thought it would be wonderful if we could do something."



Samuel approached General Paint, and the company agreed to donate not only paint for Ryes' living room but also for the bedroom. Staff volunteered their time for the latter, and local painter Frank Faz-zolari, of The Art of Colour, painted the main-floor areas.

Havens for Healing literally changed Ryes' outlook, rearranging her living space to make it more conducive to healing. Samuel, of Change by Design Home Staging and Interior Re-design, worked with

fellow redesigners Kristy Malone of Refining Design and Linda Ardito of Emerging Spaces. They use the principles of interior design, but rather than replacing furniture and accessories with new ones, they use existing items for a more cost-effective, environmentally friendly and personal result.

The makeovers offer creative placement of existing furnishings and accessories to transform a space, usually in one day, Samuel says. "Redesigners 'shop' the house, taking what they like from various rooms to create a totally different look. The reveal is always fantastic, with people saying, 'You did it with all my stuff!' It uses their personal items, things that have meaning to them, and creates a comfortable space."

Ryes would be on intravenous five hours a day for a full week following each chemotherapy session, with not much to look at besides the TV and the walls. The sofa was also directly in line with the front door, offering her no privacy. The redesign changed all that. The sofa was moved to a wall beside the sliding glass doors, giving her a view of the large backyard and the park beyond. The TV can now be viewed from any vantage point in the open-concept room. Photos were placed at eye level, and special accessories were placed throughout the room.

The Havens team also went a step further and redesigned Ryes' bedroom, creating a clean, bright space. Ryes said she used to lie in

bed and look at the clutter, wanting to do something about it but lacking the energy. Now she says she can truly relax.

"Your surroundings are important," Ryes says. "If they're nicely put together, you feel better."

Ryes says the volunteers and their work had an "amazing" impact on her. "I'm so touched. They shared their time and love by doing things for someone they didn't even know."

Ryes, who shared the good news of her remission, plans to give back by volunteering to do whatever she can to help Havens for Healing.

CRDA is a non-profit organization with over 250 certified design and staging specialists across the country. Havens for Healing members volunteer their time and expertise. To date, they have completed 14 Havens projects and want to spread the word that they're willing and able to do more. If you know a woman with ovarian cancer who would benefit from the service, visit www.canadianredesignersassociation.org or call 1-800-950-CRDA (2732).

Redesign services are also available to the general public for \$55 per hour and up. Says Samuel, "In today's economy, and with the need to be green, it makes sense to redesign."



Photos: Brenda Watson