

Local designers refurbish items, raise \$5G at fundraiser

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LYNN — The three-level bookshelf was tilting forward on shaky wooden legs that were splintered and scratched.

Armed with a can of white spray paint and a yellow and blue print wallpaper, Marblehead designer Paula Gaull transformed the weathered shelf into a spotlight stealer at a furniture design challenge in Lynn.

Gaull was one of three North Shore designers who turned furniture found at the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless furniture bank into pieces that were auctioned for hundreds of dollars at a fundraiser on Thursday for the coalition.

The total take: \$5,000.

The designers spent weeks before the show refurbishing coalition furniture like the bookshelf. They showed off their work at an event hosted by the North Shore Association of Realtors that drew more than 100 people to the coalition's Lynn headquarters.

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Mirroring popular design shows on TV, the designers had one hour to put together a room using the spruced-up coalition furniture and their own accessories.

Designer Arlene Jaffe Aubrey, owner of Pure and Simple HOME in Topsfield, said she found it exhilarating to work under pressure with limited resources.

"I wanted to show people they could re-do and make things stylish without spending a lot of money," she said as she laid out family photos on a desk from the coalition that she outfitted with new knobs. The knobs, she said, matched the red polka dot fabric she stapled onto an old bench under the desk.

"I wanted to make a room where you could relax, have a glass of wine," she said of her self-described shabby chic/coastal design.

Next to her, designer Gaull, of Marblehead's New Leaf Redesign, and her team were debating which pillows from her shop to throw on the coalition couch that was a focal point of her warm, shabby-chic-inspired room.

Like Aubrey, Gaull said creating an expensive-looking room doesn't have to cost money: A little bit of paint and the right accessories go a long way, she said.

"Decorating comes down to putting stuff in your room that you love and that makes you smile," she said.

And designers Danika Herrick and Cheryle Rhuda, who own Beverly-based Danika & Cheryle and O'verlays by Danika & Cheryle, bought latex paint from an auto body shop to completely re-do two upright, wide-back chairs from the coalition.

Herrick said paint, as well as patterned overlays, made all the difference in making hand-me-down furniture the stars of their "preppy, funky" room.

After the rooms were finished, the refurbished pieces were auctioned off, said Robyn Frost, the coalition's executive director. She said this was the first event ever held at the coalition's Bubier Street warehouse.

"It's wicked exciting," she said.

Susan Kline, CEO of North Shore Association for Realtors, said the furniture challenge was a natural fit to promote a wide variety of organizations and raise money for the coalition.

"It's just been a really great community event," she said.

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To learn more

- For more information about Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, go to mahomeless.org.

- For more information about North Shore Realtors, visit northshore Realtors.com (<http://northshore Realtors.com>)

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