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Chesterfield Observer

FAMILY

A military makeover Interior redesigner helps military wives prepare for their husbands' return



Elli Morris/Chesterfield Observer

Lynn Dillingham's (above) bedroom recently received a makeover by interior redesigner Vicki Macenka. Macenka is donating her expertise in interior design to women whose husbands are serving in the military overseas.

By Marcy Horwitz
 CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Lynn Dillingham is a seasoned Coast Guard wife. So when her husband Dean was assigned to Guantanamo Bay last year, she did what all military wives do: she coped. From September until June, she ran the household. She got the children – four of them – to school, sports practices, games and lessons. She helped with homework. She fixed whatever broke around her Woodlake home. And she waited for Dean to get back.

At the same time, Vicki Macenka was wondering how she could help women like Dillingham. A certified interior redesign and home staging professional, Macenka had just opened her business, Interior Transformations, in Chesterfield. Then it came to her: she would contribute her interior design talents to women whose husbands were away in service to their country. Dillingham's bedroom became one of her first projects.

Dillingham had long dreamed of a retreat that she and Dean could call their own, a special place for themselves alone.

"But I was barely able to keep my head above water," she says, describing her life during Dean's absence.

Any thoughts she had about transforming her bedroom last year were simply put on the back burner.

Until she met Macenka.

Macenka took on the task of transforming the master bedroom into Dillingham's dream retreat. After the two women met to talk about Dillingham's vision, Macenka helped create window treatments and selected a comforter and coordinating fabrics. She repositioned furniture and accessories to enhance architectural features. She "borrowed" lamps from another room. She shopped – both with Dillingham and without her – keeping cost and value uppermost in

her mind.

Dillingham is especially pleased with the mini-makeover Macenka gave to one treasured piece. The Dillinghams are saving some of their older furniture for their children, the oldest of whom will leave for college in two years. Macenka suggested a new tasseled throw and four soft pillows. What had once been a drab loveseat with mismatched cushions is now an inviting place to sit, relax and talk – all for under \$50.

"It's like having a new piece of furniture," says Dillingham, "without the expense!"

After several weeks, Dillingham had a new space.

"It's incredible," she says. "It's exactly what I was looking for."

Macenka estimates that the value of her contributed services amounts to about \$500 per project. When she thinks of the sacrifices the women are making while their husbands are in service, she's glad to do it.

"These girls deserve it," she says.

Future projects include bedrooms and dens in Walnut Glen and Foxcroft.

And what about Dean?

When he returned from Cuba late last spring, he had only one word to say when Dillingham opened the door to their "new" master bedroom.

"Wow!"

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