

Habitat for Humanity Showroom Helps **ReStore Décor**



Homeowners create designer looks while shopping on a DIY budget.

Article and Photos by Brenda Silva

Whether furnishing a brand-new home or freshening the look of an older one, finding the right design and décor are usually at the top of a homeowner's to-do list. Luckily for DIY decorators, there's the Habitat for Humanity ReStore that can meet the demands of any browser and budget, ensuring satisfied customers who are certain to return.

Since 1976, Habitat for Humanity has established itself as an organization in the business of helping people. Both in building homes and communities, the organization has solidified its reputation as a world leader in "addressing the issues of poverty housing." In addition to providing new residential structures, Habitat for Humanity also helps

families furnish their homes with quality, cost-effective merchandise, like the items available at the Indian River Habitat for Humanity ReStore, located right here in Vero Beach.

On a recent day at Vero's Habitat ReStore, General Manager Sheradi Monroe noticed a customer who seemed to have a good eye for décor. She struck up a conversation with the man, which led to a discussion about the man's background, as well as the store's expansion plan – which included adding 9,500 square feet to the existing 30,000. By the time their conversation was over, New York designer (who splits his time there with Vero Beach) Michael Buchanan had made a friend and a commitment to contribute his expertise to half of the new space.

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- In kids' rooms, twin beds can be changed easily for guests with neutral linens.
- Use accent items and multiple pillows for color and comfort.
- Add a valance or small photos over the beds to give more scale and proportion.
- For married guests, consider a connector to join the twins and make a king-sized bed.



Monroe said, "It's going to be a co-branding as we work together. We'll have a space in the store that features his design and decorating ideas with our merchandise. Customers will be able to see for themselves what can be done with the variety of merchandise we offer."

As the first step in the collaboration, Michael Buchanan designed several vignettes (decorated room illustrations) using furniture and fixtures that were on display at the ReStore showroom. He imparted his "thrifty decorator" aesthetic – which creates designer chic looks at budget-friendly prices – and the results were designs that customers wanted to purchase the very same day.

For the first vignette, Buchanan focused on scale and proportion, creating a sitting room using chairs covered with sea foam green fabric. The chairs were complemented by a rug that included the same color,

as well as a wicker dresser with shell drawer pulls that echoed the shell-shaped backs of the chairs. An oversized round mirror drew a comparison with the round rug in much the same way two rectangular wall hangings subtly paired with an Asian screen of a similar size. After adding two neutral-colored lamps, along with a quirky monkey table, the whole room cost about \$700 – half of the wholesale cost – and it reflected pure designer chic.

Buchanan pointed out, "At the ReStore, you can find a lot of gently-used hidden treasures if you look. I found a rug for \$85 that would cost thousands brand new elsewhere, a Nagucci table for \$185 that would be 10 times that when purchased new in another store, and Scal amandre silk drapes for \$160 per panel versus original retail of \$1,800 in another store. Often, a little money and a good eye can do wonders for your home décor."



- Embrace the current trend of antiquity as an older style that is new again.
- Using a multi-panel screen creates a wall that defines the space.
- With many different patterns, use solid colored accents or fabrics to break it up.
- Make the space unique to look at, but also welcoming enough for regular use.



- Designers love animal prints. Homeowners using them can also achieve a high-end look.
- When using a bold print, neutralize everything around it like pillows and tables.
- Create a complementary theme for the room – i.e. a safari, hunting lodge, etc.
- Complete the designer look with art and furnishings that reinforce the theme.

As his other four vignettes came together at the ReStore, Buchanan was quick to point out that DIY homeowners shouldn't only focus on traditional uses when considering a room's design.

He said, "It's all about looking for ways to repurpose items for a new use. Take a dresser and use it as a credenza or use a bench from your bedroom in the dining room. Being able to think outside the box really expands design options for creative home decorators."

Future events at the newly-expanded ReStore include their grand re-opening on October 13th, which will include prizes, giveaways, and entertainment. This special event will also feature a live radio broadcast with Rhett Palmer, Vero Beach's "Mayor of the Airwaves," as well as Buchanan offering homeowners advice on how to refresh their homes in preparation for the holidays. In December, Buchanan will offer decorat-

ing labs at the ReStore, where customers can ask for his design input on home projects.

Buchanan suggests that anyone wanting to create a designer space using budget-friendly materials can do so by simply remembering his favorite phrase: "Thrifting doesn't have to be cheap." In other words, homeowners can purchase cost-effective items and still achieve a high-end look in their homes.

He sums up, "It's really amazing to work with Habitat for Humanity and be able to give back – because that's what it's all about for me. Being able to take someone's dwelling and help make it a home, that's what tugs at my heartstrings and makes doing this even more important."

Brenda Silva is an editor/freelance writer who recently moved to Vero Beach. Any questions or comments can be sent to her at bsilva23@hotmail.com.

- Find inspiration in a large furniture item, then create a theme and build on it.
- Use textures like the sea grass rug and wicker seating to establish a beach feel.
- Use a solid throw to break-up the sofa pattern, and beach slipcovers to enhance theme.
- Find art and additional pillows to create the desired beach chic room.

