

DIGHTON

# Decorator offers room makeovers to local women coping with divorce

By **KENDRA LEIGH SARDINHA**

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DIGHTON — With a little paint, some easy fixes to furniture and a vision of a homeowner, a local woman has taken her passion for interior design and expanded it to help others.

Mishelle Almeida, owner of Misha Interiors, has 12 years of decorating under her belt. She specializes in home staging and room makeovers with clientele mainly from Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Almeida's interest in room design and interiors was sharpened by the dramatic changes

she went through after her husband of 13 years was sent on a second tour of duty in the Middle East with the Massachusetts National Guard.

After serving 13 months in Afghanistan, her husband returned home. He had a hard time returning to a normal life and decided he did not want to be married anymore.

Almeida said it was a difficult time, but with the help of family and friends she and her daughter Alexis, 11, who was 5 at the time, have adjusted.

While going through the divorce, Almeida needed to do something for herself, and she settled on revamping her bedroom.

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"A bedroom is a very personal space," said Almeida, "by re-designing it, I made it my retreat, my sanctuary, a place where I could recharge my batteries."

Having found her own "happy place," she started her foundation, Room for You, and has partnered with Joanie Winberg, the founder of the National Association of Divorcee for Woman and Children, to help women like herself.

With her foundation still new, Almeida joined forces

with Winberg and recently re-designed the bedroom of a woman who went through Winberg's program.

"Instantly, when I met Mishelle, I knew this was going to be an enjoyable experience," said the homeowner, who declined to give her name. "Mishelle came in, listened to me and got ideas for what I wanted. She wanted to make sure that this was truly a space for me and a place I would love."

The homeowner said in the end, she ended up with a retreat that is truly hers.

"It is a true reflection of me as a single woman," she said. "It is no longer a reminder of the life that I shared with my former

spouse."

The entire process takes about five days. At the initial meeting, Mishelle met the homeowner to take "before" pictures, ask questions about expectations and measure the space.

Winberg is a huge believer in Almeida's program. "Mishelle is a caring and compassionate woman who wants to make a difference by giving back as an interior decorator," she said. "To see the joy on a client's face when Mishelle transforms a room into a sacred space is magical."

The next step is shopping for some materials such as paint, fabric and some furniture pieces.

Over the next few days Almeida and the homeowner prepare the walls for painting, paint any furniture that needs it and place it, make and/or install window treatments and place accessory items.

Almeida's daughter loves her redesigned room too.

"It definitely gave her something positive to focus on with her dad being deployed," said Almeida. It gives her space where she can be herself, a place that reflects who she is."

In the near future, Almeida hopes to reach not only women who have gone through divorce, but those who have experienced difficult experiences related to the military.



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