

Room redesign creates a 'haven for healing'

By lacy atalick

September 26, 2008 11:31 AM



For Philamina Neves, something as simple as rearranging furniture has helped her stay positive while battling ovarian cancer.

The high school teacher and mother of three was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in April, and has been going through treatment to fight the disease.

But juggling her family, job, and now medical treatments, left her little time to tend to her home.

A program called Haven for Healing created in a partnership between the Canadian ReDesigners Association and Ovarian Cancer Canada gives homes like Neves' a new look simply by redesigning a room in the house.

In September, which is also ovarian cancer awareness month, Philamina gave volunteer re-designers Rosina D'Ardis and Nadine Matejuk permission to go around the house and collect anything they felt suited the room.

They found lots of sculptures, pictures and statues in the basement that had just been collecting dust, and after repositioning the furniture, they made for comforting decorations, Neves said.

Two wooden musicians in the basement that Neves had bought 20 years ago were brought up to match an Afro-Caribbean theme that was created in her living room, while statues and paintings made for a Roman theme in the adjoining dining room.

"When I got them I really liked them but then they were forgotten... Now I actually enjoy them. I like sitting here," Neves said about her new-found treasures.

As a high school teacher with teenage sons, she said she never cared about orientating her house for the sake of relaxation.

"(The re-designers) said we have nice pieces but if you came here before you wouldn't have noticed because there was too much clutter," she said.

But since repositioning the furniture, Neves said she sits in her living room just to look out the window or read a book, something she never did before.

She said they even cleaned out her china cabinet in the dining room, and dug out decorations that had lost their meaning while collecting dust in there.

One soapstone statue of a woman and three boys was found in the cabinet, which Neves said means a lot to her but she never enjoyed it.

"Now I can see things I really enjoy that I wouldn't have noticed," she said, adding that less clutter and furniture that

is balanced in the room allows her to relax and enjoy her home.

The Portuguese-native said she has a lot of family and loves to entertain in her house, and guests have commented on the difference the redesign has made.

D'Ardis, of Enhance It Interiors, said before they worked on the room, the couches faced each other and the majority of the rest of the furniture was all along one wall.

The set-up prevented her family and guests from being able to watch TV while sitting on the couch, Neves said, adding people usually sat on the floor.

After three and a half hours of balancing lighting, furniture and artwork, Neves was blindfolded and led into the newly redesigned room.

"It was extremely rewarding to see someone going through an unfortunate time and be so revived," D'Ardis said.

Neves said the redesign helped her stay positive while fighting ovarian cancer but anyone can benefit from a redesign.