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# THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

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**Section:** Home

**Edition:** Final Chaser

**Page:** HO1

## HOPE SWEET HOPE

*Susan Felt, The Arizona Republic*

The mission of Florence Crittenton of Arizona, which provides shelter and a second chance for at-risk girls, is to give "every girl whose life we touch safety, hope and opportunity."

Rebecca Masterson and Melissa Audrain wanted to add one more: a cool place to live. A home that when you walk in the door, your inner decorator says, "Yes!"

Masterson left a law career in 2007 to open **Embellish** the Home, a Phoenix home-accessories store with lamps, pillows, furniture and other items particularly suited for the period homes in historic districts. She has teamed with Audrain, an interior designer, on many client projects.

But one of their most satisfying has been the transformation of a functional living room into an inviting retreat for the five women living at Florence Crittenton's Living Learning House.

The two-story home near downtown Phoenix opened about three years ago for promising girls in their late teens and early 20s who were leaving state-supported programs. The home and its programs allow women to gain job skills and manage a home before moving out on their own. It's one of several transitional residences supported by Florence Crittenton.

The program is small. As many as six women live in the home, and its living room had a hand-me-down, utilitarian look due to lack of funding. Though the room was neat, clean and functional, Masterson and Audrain wanted something special.

The two were used to working for clients who could afford their fee, as well as new furnishings. They wanted the Crittenton girls to see the same benefits as their previous clients, Masterson said.

"We wanted to give them something that was brand-spanking new and just for them," she said.

About six months ago, impressed with what they knew of the program, Masterson and Audrain approached Florence Crittenton staff with their plans.

They were given the go-ahead, said Lory Lasica, marketing and communications manager at Florence Crittenton of Arizona.

The two women had fundraisers, but most of the money -- an estimated \$12,000 -- came from Masterson's store, vendors such as McFarland's Carpet and their own pocketbooks.

And like most people trying to add some pizzazz to their main living area, Masterson and Audrain were on a budget. Masterson was adamant that it not involve used or abused furnishings. The girls had had enough of that in their young lives.

They clocked more than 100 hours in designing, ordering and installing the furniture and decor.

The home's floor plan already was strong, with a nice flow between the living room and large adjoining kitchen and dining room. There were plenty of windows and ample wall space. The rooms were spacious but well-proportioned, and the agency had just had the remodeled home painted a soft yellow. The color would stay.

But the furniture was too large for the space and the television was the focal point. The room needed balance, cohesion and pop.

Audrain suggested a chocolate and apple-green palette to complement the wall color. Cranberry red would add the pizzazz.

They chose a soft, textured but durable, chocolate woven-chenille-upholstered sofa to replace the faux-leather sofa and love seat combination. And two linen-covered apple-green damask-patterned chairs completed the living room seating area. The chairs are slipcovered for easy cleaning. The linen fabric is repeated in the upholstered ottoman that serves as a footstool and coffee table.

There are other touches, including candles, beaded pillows, a bowl of green apples and artwork. Framed black-and-white photographs of iconic scenes from London and Paris grace the entryway.

For Asia Harris, 19, who moved into the home about five months ago, the living room is now her favorite space.

"It used to have lots of reds and leather couches," Harris said. "It was kind of masculine. It was too boyish."

The message Masterson and Audrain wanted to deliver with the new living room is not lost on Harris, who plans to go to college and study law enforcement.

"I was surprised it made a difference to have new furniture. It was very sterile (before) and not very open," she said.

"I feel cared about. I actually feel cared about."

Reach the reporter at [susan.felt@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:susan.felt@arizonarepublic.com) and at 602-444-8246.

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