



2015 Designers: Front row (from left): National spokesperson Mark Brunetz, Michelle Schildgen, FLOOR360 Owner Bob Tobe, Stephanie Klein, Angie Lowe, Linda Lindner. Middle row: Debbie Lea, Lori Leistico, Angela Skalitzky, Autumn Siankovsky, Dani Frank, Caren King, Alyssa Trautman, Danielle Curti, Courtney Wollersheim, Cathy Driftmier, Tara Bueding, Katie Merical, Abby Weiss. Back row: Christie Thompson, Jennifer Rosen Heinz, Dondi Szombattaly

Design for a Difference is a community based movement sponsored by Madison based FLOOR360 that brings together the local interior design community to makeover much needed spaces for local charities. The 2015 Charity recipient was The Center for Families.

After nine months of planning by the interior design team and with the help of over 100 companies and individuals contributing over \$140,000 of goods and services the Center for Families received an incredible makeover. The result was a totally redesigned space that sings heart, joy, comfort, safety and love for Madison's most at-risk children.

*Design for a Difference-Madison, Sponsored by FLOOR360*





## DESIGN FOR A DIFFERENCE LOCAL VOLUNTEERS REFRESH MADISON'S CENTER FOR FAMILIES

BY SHELBY DEERING  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY SHANNA WOLF

A few days after the reveal of the Center for Families' renovated Respite Center, a family of three checked in. The mother had two black eyes and had spent the previous evening in a domestic fight with her partner—unfortunately, the children had been witnesses. Scared and anxious, the children were at first unwilling to leave their mother. But as they started to explore the new space, their frowns quickly turned into smiles. Seeing her kids absorbed in the toys and activities, their mother could breathe a sigh of relief, watching her children be children.

This family is just one of thousands that will benefit from the redesigned Respite Center, and it's all thanks to Design for a Difference, a community-driven national movement of the International Design Guild of which FLOOR360 is a member. Bob Tobe, co-founder of design focused flooring retailer FLOOR360,

brought Design for a Difference to Madison and rallied a large team of local designers who volunteered to work on the project. It was the largest Design for a Difference project yet and included over 100 individuals and companies contributing over \$140,000 of goods and services.

"The space for The Respite Center at the Center for Families was clean and safe, but it had huge potential to design a much better environment for the children in crisis who use this facility," says Tobe.

### BRIGHT AND CHEERFUL

The sunny space is accented by vivid greens, oranges and yellows. It features cozy spots to curl up with a book, a kid-sized theater complete with costumes and a stage, and a play set with a slide that gives the space a park-like appearance.

The Respite Center's bedrooms also were redesigned and an additional bedroom was built.

"I love the bedrooms," says Tobe. "The custom-painted scenes will help the children forget their troubles when looking at the wonderful scenes and the stories that they tell."

The centerpiece of the space is a tall tree, surrounded by places to sit.

Dani Frank, owner of Distinctively Danette and a lead designer on the project, says, "There was this construction support pole in the middle of the room, and it was almost like the elephant in the room. We said, 'How can we hide this?' and the design team came up with, 'What if it was like the tree of life?' It could be like the center of the kids' universe."

Caren King of Caren King Interiors and another lead designer on the project, loved that although each designer came with her own ideas, they were able to meld their visions and create a cohesive space.

"Everybody came together. That's what was so wonderful in this whole project. ... We were all on a team," she says.



## A MUCH-NEEDED BREAK

Many of the people who come to the Center for Families are having difficulties at home, and the children need a place where they can find comfort and a sense of normalcy.

Meg Miller, co-director of the Center for Families and manager of the Respite Center, explains that it provides crisis intervention, counseling, support and emergency child care for Dane County parents with children up to age 14. The Respite Center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

She adds, "Some families who are isolated and without external and few internal supports use us every few months when they need a break and always use us when they are in crisis. Some families use us consistently for years because of special needs of the parents such as mental health issues, unresolved family violence, chronic physical difficulties and more."

The refurbished Respite Center will serve over 800 children from over 450 families in a year, an average of 55 children per week.

Miller says, "A 4-year-old on her first day being cared for at the Respite Center after our makeover said, 'This is the best day of my life.'"

## THE BIG REVEAL

After nine months of planning and only a week to execute the redesign, designers, parents, volunteers and staff came together at the Respite Center on a crisp October evening to cut the ribbon and reveal its amazing makeover.

Mark Brunetz, a TV personality on the Style Network and co-founder of Design for a Difference, attended the events with a camera crew in tow. He kicked off the reveal, and amid the happy sounds of children at play, said, "This idea of designing to make a difference started about three years ago, and it was a really simple notion, that we as designers and people who work in the industry could really expand the role of what we do and make a difference, and there's no better place to do that than for a non-profit. As a result, we launched Design for a Difference. It started out as a contest and quickly morphed into a movement, which is what you're experiencing today."



Angela Skalitzky, retail sales and showroom manager at FLOOR360, was the project coordinator for Design for a Difference and attended the unveiling.

She says, "To see the staff open their eyes and discover what we had designed for them was emotionally overwhelming. To hear the gasps of the staff and see their tears meant that we succeeded in making a total transformation of the space—and that they loved and appreciated it. To see the kids walk into the space and discover all of the different areas and activities meant that we succeeded in making a space that fit the needs and interests of the kids and a positive difference that will carry on for years."

Fellow designer Frank agrees.

"I can see this being a legacy that will be around for another 20 years. I don't think that that space will be dated, that they're going to need to do anything to really change it. I think it's going to hold up well for many, many years. And thousands of kids are going to get to go through there and be happy. And we are excited to start the 2016 edition of Design for a Difference – Madison"

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FLOOR360

## About FLOOR360...

FLOOR360 is the proud sponsor of Design for a Difference in Madison. FLOOR360 is a locally-owned, design-focused flooring business offering unique collections of hardwood, carpet, tile, area rugs and window treatments.

As a member of the International Design Guild, the largest home décor cooperative in the world, FLOOR360 offers unique flooring options at competitive pricing. FLOOR360's team of specialized Interior Designers are trained in flooring products and applications, and work with homeowners, interior designers, home builders and commercial contractors to create interesting and functional spaces.

FLOOR360 is located in the Design Mart building on Verona Road in Madison and on Hillside Drive in Delafield, WI.

[www.FLOOR360.com](http://www.FLOOR360.com)



## Designed For Center For Families



Photos taken by S. Photography/Shanna Wolf for Brava Magazine



Design for a Difference-Madison brought local interior designers together to makeover a space at

a local charity. Bella Domicile was a part of this team of designers and with Dura Supreme Cabinetry, were able to design and give the Respite Center a functional kitchen their volunteers can use to better serve the children. Thank you Center For Families for touching our lives.



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