

"I NEVER KNEW ANGELS CAME IN THE FORM OF INTERIOR DESIGNERS"

— Sharyl Kato, Executive Director of The Rainbow Project



Back Row: Melissa Keyzers, Michelle Schildgen, Jennifer Rosen-Heinz, Abbey Weiss, Maria Kovach, Tara Buedding, Shannon O'Reilly, Cathy Driftmier, Katie Merical, Michelle Kahl, Denise Quade, Patti Stindt, Autumn Stankovsky, Alyssa Trautman, Lin Lindner, Alexandra Wood, Mari Johnson, Dawn McIntosh, Brooke Nowaczyk, Dani Frank. Front Row: Mark Brunetz, Angela Skalitzyk, Bob Tobe, Rochelle Lee. Not pictured: Courtney Wollersheim, Tim McKeenan, Christie Thompson, Lesley Sager, Lie Ladendorf, Dondi Szombatfalvy, Lori Leistico, Kate Paulos, Andrea Jakubczak, Sally Luck, Dan Luck, UW-Madison Interior Architecture Students.



Design for a Difference is a community based movement sponsored by Madison based FLOOR360 that brings together the local interior design community to make over much needed spaces for local charities. The 2016 charity recipient was The Rainbow Project, Inc.

After nine months of planning by the 32 person interior design team and the help of over 200

companies and individuals contributing over \$300,000 of goods and services, The Rainbow Project received an incredible makeover.

The redesign included therapy rooms, offices, reception area, a new kitchen, and a multi-functional room with up-to-date technology.

The design has helped renew the hopes and dreams of children and families who have experienced trauma.

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A FOREVER GIFT A DESIGN FOR A DIFFERENCE MAKEOVER HELPS THE RAINBOW PROJECT'S SPACE BETTER REFLECT IT'S CARING STAFF

BY SHELBY DEERING
PHOTOGRAPHED BY SHANNA WOLF

Have you ever noticed how a building seems to soak up the energy of all of those who have walked through its doors? For the past 36 years, The Rainbow Project has served over 10,800 children and 10,400 adult caregivers, providing restorative healing through therapeutic services and giving hope to those who have experienced trauma. Although there have been many triumphs and successes at the agency's East Washington location, there have been plenty of tears and heartache as well. And unfortunately the sadness, instead of the joy, was being reflected in the space's worn-out interior.

"We weren't exactly ashamed of our space, but it was wearing and worn. Much of what we had was 10 or 20 years old, if not older. Even some of the young children commented that we needed

new carpet or a bookshelf," says Sharyl Kato, executive director and child/adult and family therapist.

Then Design for a Difference stepped in, and everything changed.

A WELL-DESERVED MAKEOVER

Design for a Difference is a community-driven national movement of the International Design Guild. Bob Tobe, co-founder of FLOOR360 in Madison, heads Design for a Difference here and in 2015 designers gave The Respite Center at the Center for Families a floor-to-ceiling makeover.

"FLOOR360 is extremely proud to continue to sponsor and lead this amazing charity movement. The amount of volunteer participation from the Madison design community and the contributions from the business community has been incredible," says Tobe.

Angela Skalitzky, showroom manager and interior designer at FLOOR360, led the 2016 project, and says, "The Rainbow Project needed this makeover because their space was lacking organization and balance, the furniture was old and worn and the carpet was stained from 18 years of wear and tear. As a designer who can immediately see the potential in any space, I really don't know how they could function day-to-day as it was. The staff is made up of the most caring, genuinely good people I have ever met, and they deserve for their space to be a reflection of how much they care and take pride in their work."

Thirty-two designers rallied together to transform the space, prioritizing the needs on The Rainbow Project's wish list: new lighting, easy-to-care-for furniture, an updated staff break room and plenty of storage.

The result of months of hard work and planning is a space that is decidedly cheerful, colorful and beautiful. The surroundings have been completely refreshed, thanks to 7,400 square feet of luxury vinyl flooring, a state-of-the-art conference room, a kitchen transformed into a retreat space for the therapists, new lighting, updated offices to suit each therapist's personal tastes and needs and much more. The Rainbow Project also received a new website, logo and security system as a result of the makeover.

Kato says, "Our environment now matches what we do and how we feel about our work. We cannot thank Design for a Difference enough for their forever gift."



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—ANGELA SKALITZKY,
SHOWROOM MANAGER AND
INTERIOR DESIGNER AT FLOOR360



DESIGN CHANGES LIVES

The Rainbow Project's many children and families will now be able to heal in a space that's warm, inviting and comforting.

"One of the children I work with who is not prone to expressing anything positive stated that he could live in our new multipurpose room all day, and he especially loved the giant pillows and cool hammock swing," says Kato.

Kato believes that the makeover has uplifted the therapists as well.

"We are all very upbeat folks here, but there are extra-broad smiles on our faces along with motivation to be more productive."

The designers have also been changed through the process.

Tara Buedding, a professional organizer and the owner of The Happy Home Organizer LLC, says, "The best part of the whole project is the 'reveal day'—just to see the look of joy and gratefulness on the faces of the people who we are helping makes all of our long hours and hard work worthwhile."

Abbey Weiss, creative director at Bella Domicile, agrees that the reveal day is fulfilling, saying, "My heart was so full of joy as I was watching the therapists' faces as we revealed their offices. Their gratitude and excitement was contagious."



She adds, "As the children learn that this makeover was done by volunteers, they will begin to see that there are great people in this world and not all are monsters."

Cathy Driftmier, owner and principal of Driftmier Design LLC, says, "Design for a Difference is by far the most amazing and rewarding program I have ever been involved in. To have a great team of designers and the community come together for a worthy cause is exhilarating. I will continue to be part of it for as many years as I am able to hold a hammer or a paintbrush."

A LABOR OF LOVE

In addition to the designers, many other people came together to make The Rainbow Project's makeover possible.

Lesley Sager, a faculty associate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was approached to have her students develop their design chops through the project. Her "Materials and Finishes" class designed the hallways, installing laser-cut woodland creatures, trees and silhouettes of dancing fairies.

"My students wanted to transform the hallways into areas of joy with elements of surprise for the children," says Sager.

"Not only was working with Design for a Difference beneficial to my education and my future career, but it also went toward helping an amazing organization," says junior Macky Rehm.

Sophomore Maya Mockert says, "It was fulfilling to have this opportunity to put my fingerprint on something that will help improve someone's life."

When it comes to local Design for a Difference projects, FLOOR360 is taking the lead in growing this charity movement. During The Rainbow Project makeover, over 20 office staff, salespeople and more assisted in the demolition and tear-out of the space.

The Rainbow Project makeover was truly a heart-centered undertaking. As Skalitzy puts it, "The children will feel the love that our design team has poured into the space by simply walking into it."

At the Oct. 16 reveal of the updated space, there were smiles, laughter and happy tears. The joyful surroundings couldn't help but radiate a flood of positive vibes, which will surely brighten the lives of everyone who comes to The Rainbow Project.

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