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LakeNorman

MAGAZINE

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Happiness Redesigned

Lake Norman interior designer Christina Lewis reinvents her life and her home, using happiness as the focal point.

by DEB MITCHELL • photos by JUSTIN SMITH

It's amazing what can happen when you choose to look at something just a little bit differently.

That's what Christina Lewis, owner and lead designer of the ReDesign Company in Cornelius, lives by every day, whether helping her clients' homes feel brand new by using things they already own or, along with her husband, Tim, helping others find happiness at home through better marriages.

Lewis' life wasn't always so deeply fulfilling. Ten years ago, she and Tim, unhappy in their marriage and their lives in general, quit their jobs, sold most of their belongings, and moved with their sons, Camden and Cole, from their house in New Hampshire to a much smaller home in the Lake Norman area, all in an effort to up their "happiness quotient."

This downsized lifestyle freed Tim up to go back to school for a master's degree in psychology. "It forced me to read every book about marriage that's ever been written!" he says. Although he now works full time for an energy company, Tim's marriage counseling practice shares a URL (www.lovecominghome.com) with Lewis's design firm.

In 2005, Lewis launched the ReDesign Company, based on the idea that, as she puts it, "You don't have to buy a \$10,000 sofa to be happy." Using a unique talent for transforming

The Lewis family, from left
is Camden, 14, Tim, 46,
Christina, 45, and Cole, 17.





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her clients’ spaces with items they already own, Lewis and her team create rooms that look surprisingly cohesive and well-designed, with no hint of hodge-podge.

“The people looking to hire us love our story, love that we incorporate what they already have,” she says, “Sure, it can be hard to make that thing that’s sentimental to them fit into the room’s design, but that’s what moves people’s souls. We really do pay attention to what they have and love, and to what’s important to them.”

Lewis’ own home is filled with storied items: a petrified wood coffee table and a tufted velvet sofa that have been with the family for years, her grandparents’ china hung artfully on a dining room wall, and an industrial-chic wooden light fixture by famed

furniture designer Joe Manus hanging in the home’s office (Lewis met Manus by chance at Costco on her son’s 16th birthday; she invited him to the party that night and he arrived with the light as a gift for the birthday boy).

Because ‘gallery walls’ are one of Lewis’s favorite decorating devices, her home’s walls boast groupings of everything from mirrors to maps, to her children’s artwork. Hung randomly enough to look relaxed yet precisely enough to look neat, Lewis displays framed cards from friends alongside paintings and treasured family photos, one of which is so special to Lewis, in fact, that she also wears a miniaturized copy hanging from a chain around her neck instead of a wedding ring.

Lewis even worked her magic in the family’s garage. As the



Lewis' own home is filled with storied items like her grandparents' china hung artfully on a dining room wall.





boys, and their frequently visiting friends, grew, she realized they needed space to stretch out, hang out, and just be guys. Rather than upsize to a larger home, Lewis converted their detached garage into a hip, teen-worthy man cave.

"They're out there all the time!" she says. She brought in space heaters for the colder months and the boys watch movies and play video games on a flat screen TV a counseling client gave Tim as a creative form of payment. Lewis relegated garage items that couldn't be stored elsewhere like the lawnmower to a 'garage closet' she fashioned using inexpensive curtain panels.

The creation of the man cave, along with the outfitting of the backyard with fairy lights, various seating groups, and a fire pit, means the family now lives in—and enjoys—literally every square inch of space they own.

By looking at her life and her home from a different angle, Lewis reinvented both to be simpler and more meaningful. Her talent and efforts toward helping others do the same have earned awards and accolades, such as the selection of the ReDesign Company to design the stage for TEDxCharlotte in the fall of 2014 and multiple consumers' choice awards from the Charlotte community.

In yet another riff on Lewis's passion for helping others to "love coming home," she and Tim are writing a marriage book together. "It's not another how-to book," says Lewis, "It's a snarky, irreverent book about marriage."

Whether it's helping people redesign their rooms or reinvent their marriages, Lewis says, "We want people to be able to look around their homes and just feel happy." **LNM**