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# Beauty on a Budget

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When you walk into Michelle and Tyler Radez' Cape Cod home in Avenue, you would never suspect that they have lived there just over three years. Nor would you imagine a large majority of the decor to be either used or reclaimed. It would never cross your mind that the decorating was done on a very limited budget. What would likely cross your mind is that the house is very warm, charming, cheerful and just absolutely beautiful. As you walked around the home you would be drawn to the plethora of detailed decor and architectural elements that Michelle has spent hundreds of hours planning, researching and applying.

As you were welcomed into the home, you would love hearing the story about the various pieces of history that are scattered throughout as well as built into the home, like the 110-year-old wide trim and mantels salvaged from an old home that was being torn down, or the old army cabinet installed in their breakfast area, or the pull-down map that used to hang at an Insurance Company in Leonardtown. These are just a few of the dozens and dozens of stories to be heard. Michelle, the founder and owner of the

very popular decor and furnishings store The Vintage Source, located in Compton, would never refer to herself as a decorator, although by looking at the house, I would take exception to that. She put incredible thought into everything in the home. She had a vision of what she wanted and went on a long treasure hunt to create it. She shopped thrift stores, yard sales, auctions, Craigslist, local antique stores and loads of other places for her inspirations and purchases. She sees past what a thing is to what it could be with some repair and paint.

Beyond the incredible decorating of the house is the story of what went into the designing and building of this dream home. It included lots of sacrifice, patience and hard work. The Radezes searched for years before finding the perfect lot in a small, friendly community. The house has a view of St. Patrick's Creek. Tyler, who is originally from upstate New York, and Michelle, whose family (Combs) roots go back more than 300 years in St. Mary's County, wanted to raise their two sons in a place where they could ride their bikes and be connected to their neighbors. So they sold



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their large home in Leonardtown and moved into a small apartment above The Vintage Source, where they lived for two years in order to save money and act as their own building contractor. Michelle started her treasure hunt and stored her findings in a family barn while they were under construction.

Since they acted as their contractor, some of the work was done by the Radezes and their family. The house was designed by Michelle's late father, Bob Combs, after she spent hours going through model homes and design books. She described what she wanted and he drew the plans. Her brothers helped with the construction as well.

Michelle, who has an environmental educator, while no longer is teaching, is continuing to make an impact. It was important to both she and Tyler that they build a home that took advantage of all the opportunities available to help preserve the earth. They installed solar panels and a geothermal heating and air system, which is not only great for the environment, but leaves them with no electric bill nine months out of the year. When it came time to clear part of their lot, they used goats, which were a gift from Michelle's coworkers. They are still on the job and have become members of the family.

With her environmental background, it was a perfect fit for Michelle to decorate with used, antique or old furnishings. She did a great job of infusing the old with the new throughout the house. The white kitchen cabinets look great adjacent to the antique army cabinet in the eating area. The industrial lighting in the Jack and Jill bath are a great complement to the antique pocket doors. The house is eclectically decorated with a blend of different styles including mid-century modern, traditional, farmhouse, and cottage. The window trim throughout the house is painted black, which lends an industrial element of design. There is great use of color all over the house, providing a very cheerful feel. The layers of different elements come together beautifully and give the house a unique, homegrown elegance. It is truly a beauty by the sea. •



## Decorating on a budget

Michelle's helpful hints

If I were decorating on a limited budget (and I do, all the time), hands down I would be hitting up the thrift stores, local and beyond. Vintage Values, Habitat for Humanity, Salvation Army and Goodwill. We have all these in our local area plus there are more in King George, Va. and Annapolis, Md. The best way to handle thrift stores is to go in several times a week and breeze through quickly with limited expectations. Don't overthink your purchases either. Have a general list and be willing to think outside the box. Anything can be painted for a whole new look and drab upholstery can be transformed with new fabric and slipcovers like what Sheryl Tart does at Slipcover Cottage. In fact, every piece of upholstered furniture in Sheryl's house was second-hand that she then updated with new fabrics. If the structure of the furniture is good, why not just change out the fabric for a fraction of the cost of new?!

Also, trending right now is being able to buy from Facebook local groups that sell used furniture. Search Facebook yard sale groups for Southern Maryland too.

But what if you are not a re-doer? You don't have the time or the creativity. Then you should be checking out other stores in our local area like The Vintage Source, Lola Belle, Traditions, Keepin' It Local, The Apple Basket, Home Elements, The Fabric Store, Maryland Antique Center, Glory Days, etc. These places offer furniture, accessories, design work or fabric plus loads of inspiration when you are feeling stuck in your decorating rut.

1. Custom Shaker-style cabinetry done by Woodburn Cabinets, Compton
2. Vintage elements help to keep the space casual and unique
3. Vintage leather Chesterfield sofa and ottoman make for a kid-friendly rec room
4. Wood-burning fireplace makes this a three-season porch
5. Michelle's parents' wedding topper from the '60s
6. Both are used sofas – one from Craigslist and one from a local antique store!
7. Fun art-deco style wallpaper in the foyer really sets the tone of the home
8. Slop sink in the mudroom from an old hospital
9. Can you say eclectic? Old Army cabinet topped with vintage suitcases from Michelle's mother-in-law next to a mid-century dining table and chairs and a Sputnik chandelier from the '70s
10. Office with a mix of old and new, like the rug from Rugs USA and the second-hand velvet upholstered wing chairs from The Vintage Source
11. Michelle's boys share this bright bedroom, which is especially clean for this photo
12. Funky '70s brass artwork/light fixture and fun colors make this master bedroom
13. Guest room has more soothing saturated colors with the seaside paintings and layered rugs
14. Tyler researched the solar and found a kit from California to install with the help of his electrician
15. A punch of yellow and classic white keeps the house simple and streamlined
16. Box store matching sinks along with vintage maps and industrial funky lighting keep the kids' bathroom un-fussy



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