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F O R U M

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Cost-Effective Decorating Tips for Keeping Your Board and Care Home Attractive and Comfortable for Residents

Natalia Dragunova and Linda Levenson are professional decorators in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, although neither started her career in decorating. Linda received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and her early professional life was spent in the mental health and mental retardation/developmental disabilities fields. In these realms, she assisted clients in finding jobs and worked in home settings assisting clients with personal care and daily living skills. She also was a case manager for clients with mental health problems. It was only later that she returned to school, attending the Art Institute of Pittsburgh to study interior design. She has been an interior designer for six years.

Likewise, Natalia started her professional life in civil engineering in her home country of Slovakia. When she moved to the United States, she hoped to become an architect, but instead turned her skills to interior design. She has lived in Pittsburgh for about five years, and her specialties are kitchen and bath design.

From the rich background that each of these women brings--Linda with her experience in social ser-

vices and work with group homes, and Natalia with her foundation in civil engineering--comes a wealth of fascinating information and practical ideas for making board and care homes into warm, inviting spaces that residents will enjoy. All the ideas presented are low-cost, simple to undertake, and provide easy results to freshen the look of common areas and resident bedrooms.

Before we get into the details of design ideas for board and care homes, please tell me why you believe interior design is important for *any* living space.

Linda: "I went into interior design after working in the mental health field thinking that it would be something really fun and something completely different, but what I am finding is that it is almost the exact same thing. I find that, when I change people's environments, I change how they feel and how they look at their homes.

"People's homes are a reflection of who they are. I have gone into homes that have felt very stale and cold

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