



# BLISSFUL BEDROOMS

DIYers team up to create cool rooms for disabled kids.

By Jon Kalish

For the last three years, a group of New York City DIYers have been doing weekend bedroom makeovers for young people in wheelchairs. Blissful Bedrooms, founded by the husband and wife team of photographer Alex Dvoryadkin and physical therapist Martha Gold-Dvoryadkin, has no paid staff. The volunteer group pays for building supplies and materials used for handmade interior decor with donations solicited online.

Blissful Bedrooms celebrates the passions of the disabled youths while making their bedrooms more functional. Wall murals are painted by a team of artists, and store-bought furniture is sometimes modified to better accommodate the needs of people with limited physical movement.

During a December 2010 makeover at a

Bronx public housing project, the Blissful Bedrooms crew built a dressing room vanity into the wall so that Keosha Stukes, who has cerebral palsy, can pull her wheelchair in front of it. An iPad holder was attached to the arm of the wheelchair, for the new iPad Stukes was given as part of the makeover. An engineer improvised a pointer attached to a cap so the young woman can use the iPad's touch screen by moving her head.

Some of the volunteers have serious construction chops. Project manager Adam Seim, 28, worked as a professional carpenter building radio studios before taking a job as a radio engineer at a Manhattan station. Seim was used to a huge woodshop with large power tools and a dust collection system, but now he makes do with a slew of battery-operated

Alex Dvoryadkin



power and hand tools that he carts to the makeover apartments.

"You have to work with the bare minimum of tools," Seim explains as he crouches outside Stukes' apartment, shortening window blinds with a battery-powered jigsaw. "I've learned a lot as a carpenter because of this."

Neighbors on the 10th floor were good-natured about the invasion of the Blissful Bedrooms gang, who used so much of the hallway for construction and fabrication that residents could just barely make it to the elevators and incinerator chute.

For a makeover with a New York Yankees theme, Cory Mahler, who makes her living designing bedding for kids' rooms, sewed a bunch of Yankees T-shirts into a bedspread. That Yankees bedroom is in the home of an 20-year-old named Jesus. (He shares the room with his grandfather, who, the record shall note, happens to be a Mets fan.)

The two headboards in the room are custom-made. One was done in the shape of a baseball and the other as the familiar

"NY" in the Yankees logo. They were made from medium-density fiberboard cut on CNC machines at a Brooklyn fabrication shop that builds sets for TV shows and concert tours. Both materials and shop time were donated.

Like the reality TV show makeovers, Blissful Bedrooms has a dramatic reveal on Sunday night, when all the work is completed. The group throws a party attended by lots of young people in wheelchairs.

"They don't get to have these moments, these big milestones," Gold-Dvoryadkin says of the disabled youths. "This is very intense. The fact that so many cared about them and made them the focus of attention for an entire weekend is incredible for them." ✓

➕ For more great before and after pictures, go to [blissfulbedrooms.org](http://blissfulbedrooms.org).

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