

# LEARNING ABOUT INTERIOR DESIGN — AND LIFE NASSAU INTERIOR DESIGN STUDENTS RENOVATE MOMMAS HOUSE



Nassau students Eric Scigliano, Kaitlyn Melexenis and Rena Pearlman visit with MOMMAS House residents in one of the recently renovated playrooms.

Sometimes life has a way of teaching you lessons—both the lessons you set out to learn and the ones you had no idea were heading your way. Nassau Community College Interior Design students recently learned many lessons when they renovated MOMMAS House in Glen Cove. Several had to do with the skills they will need as they pursue careers in interior design. Other lessons had nothing to do with interior design, but a lot to do with life, kindness and compassion.

Touched by the house and its residents—the mothers are close to the age of the students themselves—the students took it upon themselves to independently approach local businesses for in-kind donations to MOMMAS House for this independent study project. Once they had the necessary renovation materials, the 20 students involved went to work, under the auspices of the NCC Interior Design Society and the direction of Marketing and Interior Design Prof. Roseanne Scarpelli. For an entire semester, the students painted, laid new floors, installed lighting, reupholstered furniture and did all the things that it took to completely remodel five rooms of the house.

The results, according to the house's residents and MOMMAS House Director Pat Shea, were fabulous. Shea was extremely happy with the way the rooms turned out. The students from the College were so motivated and helpful," she says.



Playtime at MOMMAS House.

"They took a house and made it a beautiful home."

Students who participated in the project bonded with the mothers and their children. "It was a rewarding experience on so many levels," says Kaitlyn Melexenis, an NCC interior design student. Motivated by their task, the students came in on Saturdays and whenever else they could to complete the job. "This was the kind of experience that combined hands-on learning for our students with giving back to a community that greatly needs the help," says Prof. Scarpelli. "The students went above and beyond what the study project originally called for."

MOMMAS House provides deserving young mothers aged 17 to 21 with a nurturing home for up to two years. The homes—there are currently three community homes and one transitional home on Long Island—offer a sanctuary where these women can get the support they need while they learn to become responsible for themselves. They alleviate the isolation of young moms, teach them how to care for their babies and offer the stable environment and daycare that allows the women to attend school or job training. As they learn the practical skills needed to be a parent, the mothers must save

money in preparation for the day they leave MOMMAS House. Donations, grants and the assistance of volunteers provide most of the 22-year-old, not-for-profit organization's support. The students who worked on MOMMAS House will not soon forget the experience. "I knew I wanted to be an interior designer," says Rena Pearlman, another design student. "What I didn't know is how much impact this project was going to have on me."

Lessons learned.