



# Inside Mary's Room

## Carrier makes cancer patients more comfortable

**W**hen a woman suffering from breast cancer sees Cassandra Christopher-Summers walk into her room, she knows things are going to get brighter.

That's because Christopher-Summers, a 17-year letter carrier and Naperville, IL Branch 1151 member, specializes in going to the homes of women with breast cancer and completely redecorating their rooms. In their time of difficulty, she brings encouragement and comfort in the form of bright colors and pleasing patterns.

The idea came to her when her cousin, Mary Ann Taylor, was diagnosed with breast cancer and began the exhausting treatment process. Christopher-Summers found that when she helped her cousin by tidying up or rearranging her room, it brightened her mood, too.

"I noticed with the chemo and radiation how it took two days for her to get back on her feet. It took a lot out of her," Christopher-Summers said. "I remember going over to visit Mary after the room makeover and she would always be in her room, sitting up reading. Prior to the makeover, she would be in the living room watching TV, so I can truly say that Mary loved the room even more after the makeover.

"What I remember the most is the smiles on their faces when they walked in the room for the first time and both my mom and Mary said, 'This is beautiful.'"

After Mary passed away in January 2008, Christopher-Summers took the idea a step further. Relying on her study of design at the Illinois Institute of Art, she

founded a non-profit group to redecorate the rooms of other breast cancer patients. She named her enterprise "Mary's Room."

She soon had a chance to bring her unique way of supporting cancer patients to another loved one when her mother, Juanita, was diagnosed with breast cancer last year. With the help of a lovingly decorated room—and early detection thanks to a mammogram—her mother recovered.

Nearly all of her makeovers involve new bedding, painting, window treatments and art work. "I like to talk with the clients to find out what inspires them," she said, "and then I compare their likes against my current inventory and budget to complete the project."

Christopher-Summers paid for supplies for the first rooms she decorated for both cancer patients and other friends out of her own pocket. Now she has gained tax-exempt status for Mary's Room and is seeking donations, volunteers and partners to expand her ability to help new patients, including people in other parts of the country. "I'm hoping to take Mary's Room to a whole new level."

For more about Mary's Room, go to [marysroomnp.com](http://marysroomnp.com). Donations are accepted on the website or at P.O. Box 5997, Naperville, IL 60567. Mary's Room also needs volunteers to help with tasks such as painting, moving furniture and minor assembly of decorative items and window dressings. ✉



Top: A room Cassandra Christopher-Summers redecorated  
Above: Christopher-Summers