

Bringing Joy TO THE 'DECORATING CHALLENGED'

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Cynthia "Boo" Matthews and Melody "Mel" Styron have known each other for a long time.

"Boo and I have been friends, roommates and co-workers on and off for 26 years," Mel said. "We think alike. It is almost telepathic at times."

Becoming business partners was a long shot because after being roommates many years ago, they each married and focused on their individual careers. Boo and Mel kept in touch sporadically, then they were brought back together as temporary roommates again after about 20 years. It must have been fate since during that time the idea to go into business together was born.

Boo and Mel opened Center Stage four years ago. As decorative design consultants, these two creative ladies stage homes to prepare them for resale. They work with real estate agents, builders and individual homeowners to give homes a polished look that will appeal to potential buyers.



One of their specialties is "Re-Design for Resale," a service for occupied dwellings. For a nominal fee, Center Stage meets with the client, provides a one-hour consultation and a list of recommendations. Here's how it works in Boo's own words: "For the occupied listing...we use the client's belongings—shopping in the home first—and give the home a fresh new look for the buyers to visualize themselves living in the home. We prepare a detailed list of recommendations, and give the seller the option of doing as much or as little of the work as they like. Consider it 'a la carte.' For a moderate fee the two of us work our magic. We can flip a house and stage it in a very short time."

Many of the homes they stage are vacant. No problem for this dynamic duo. Boo and Mel have a warehouse with furnishings and accessories to help out in any design dilemma. Taking the steps to stage a home can really bring about a lot of interest and generate quick sales.

"Staging creates a vision for potential buyers, therefore there is no need to reduce the list price," Mel explained. "It can generate up to a 6.9 percent return on investment and staged homes sell 50 percent faster."

Boo agreed: "Our success stories tell it all. Seventy-five percent of our staged homes sell within the first month."

Mel, who lives in Lake Norman with her husband, Ray, and their teacup Maltese,



The after-photo (right) shows the transformation Center Stage performed on a home in the Christenbury Wood Development in Concord.



Kaiber, enjoys cooking, boating and spending time with her friends. Originally from Charlotte, Mel says she and Boo are thrilled to be in business for themselves as it allows them to be "totally creative."

Boo was born and raised in the small town of Clinton, Tennessee. Her travels brought her to Charlotte where she met her husband, Dave. Besides three cats, Boo also owns several horses. She and David own and operate Diamond B Stables—the "B" is for Boo. And if that's not enough, Boo gives riding instructions and breaks and trains horses as part of her responsibilities at the ranch.

Boo and Mel are great examples of how women working together can make a difference. Through fundraising and sponsorship, Center Stage has helped several women's charities, and Boo is a mentor to girls and young adult women. Both women feel it's important to be a force in the community.

"I love to help people and put a smile on their faces," Mel said. "It brings me joy."

Boo agrees and adds, "I love bringing hope to those who are "decorating challenged." 🌿