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TOP STORY

Designers' program offering budget-rate consults on high-end jobs

By David M. Brown, AFN Contributor Mar 6, 2018



Special to AFN

Retaining an interior designer doesn't always mean spending superior dollars.

Interior Designer for Hire, a program sponsored by the Arizona North chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers, gives homeowners the opportunity to consult with a professional interior designer at a reduced rate to gain the many benefit of their insights. The program continues through April 30.

Now in its 10th year, the annual program matches homeowners with local ASID designers for a one- or two-hour consultation at \$75 per hour. Based in Washington, D.C., ASID is a national association of interior designers and their vendors.

With 600 interior designer members, the Arizona North Chapter serves the Valley and areas north, including cities such as Flagstaff. Members are certified as either ASID or ASID Allied.

Approximately 25 interior designers from the chapter are participating this year – including a number from Ahwatukee and the East Valley, such as Sujaya Reddy of Tempe, Debby Duke of Queen Creek and Edie Parsons of Ahwatukee, explained Tabitha Evans, president of the Arizona North chapter.

“Our designers will meet you in your home or at your place of business,” she said. “They volunteer their time, and the fees we collect as a chapter are used for student scholarships and professional-development training for our members.”

Parsons said, “Designers are educated and trained to solve design problems.”

“We are able to make suggestions based on experience, which will help to narrow choices for clients. By providing direction, designers help to remove some of the stress related to remodeling or designing a new space,” said Parsons, a 26-year resident of Ahwatukee and principal of Evoke Design, whose work includes redesigning properties for flipping and helping developers with spec homes.

Parsons recalled how one client sought her counsel on a whole-home remodeling project.

“I was able to keep them focused and provide honest direction, which kept them from feeling overwhelmed. I always attempted to keep both individuals' feelings in mind and helped them to make compromises,” said Parsons, who is in her first year with the Designer for Hire program.

“They say that I was the best investment that they made during their remodeling project. In fact, every time I see them, they say I helped save their marriage,” she added.

Two East Valley schools have students who benefitted through scholarships and other stipends are Mesa Community college and Arizona State University.

“We have eight students attending a national trade event this summer in Los Angeles, and the chapter is helping them with their tickets and lodging,” Evans explained.



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“When we began the program, we felt that this was a great way to educate the public that working with an interior designer isn’t just for people with a lot of money,” added Evans, who works with Thoma-Holec Design, a Scottsdale-based firm that develops senior living communities in the United States and Canada.

“The rate we arrived at we think is a really nice median price for the consultation. After the one- or two-hour session as part of Interior Designer for Hire, a client can then retain our designer to continue work or, perhaps, request another,” she said. “We feel there’s an interior designer for just about everyone.”



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Working with a professional designer can help in a variety of ways, even for those with good design and space acuity.

For one, a vast selection of products as well as television and Internet DIY tips can overwhelm you when you're considering redoing just a room, and an interior designer can assist in easing those choices and reducing frustration.

"I've had clients tell me they wanted wood-look tile floors, but there are too many options and they can't decide what they want," said Duke.

"After asking a few key questions (such as, who lives in the home, any pets, budget for flooring), and looking at the rest of their home, I present them with four or five options, making the selection process painless."

She is in her third year with Interior Designer for Hire. The first year, just out of Mesa Community College, she felt the program would help her, too, to gain experience with client consultations.

"Now I do it because I love helping clients reimagine a space," she said, adding that her three-year-old company, dsquared Designs, is a full-service firm that has done residential and commercial designs but is most often hired for residential kitchen and bath renovations.

Hiring a designer isn't always expensive. In fact, an interior designer can save you money.

"Imagine if you'd spent \$10,000 on that tile floor, only to realize once it was installed that it clashed with your kitchen cabinets? What if you ordered a sectional sofa, and when it was delivered, you realized the fabric you'd selected was a cool gray, when you wanted warm gray?" Duke said. "Now you have a tile floor you can't replace easily and a sofa you can't return."

A few years ago, before she became a client of Duke's, one client chose new flooring, granite countertops and a tile back splash at a store. "She abhorred her cabinets but installed the new granite on them anyway," Duke said.

A few years later, she hired Duke to renovate her master bathroom and also wanted advice about her kitchen, including replacing those yellowed cabinets while retaining the granite counters.

"We found a contractor who was able to remove the original cabinets and replace with sable-colored maple cabinets, while keeping the granite in place. I was able to give her a functional layout, without changing her original footprint," she said, "and now her kitchen is beautiful."

Information: azn.asid.org.



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