

# DRAPERY & DESIGN PROFESSIONAL

Volume 2010, Issue 2



Serving the Custom Home Furnishings Industry since 1993

# DRAPERY & DESIGN PROFESSIONAL

a publication of the  
CUSTOM HOME FURNISHINGS ACADEMY

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## From the Editor-in-Chief

H ave you noticed our table of contents category headers? They all begin with a verb. A verb is an action word and that's what D&D PROFESSIONAL magazine is all about — helping readers take action and move businesses to the next level.

The **LEARN** section is all about step-by-step instructions.

This month you will learn how to repurpose a chair back with Laurie Medford, make a panel with an angled, flip valance with Susan W. Schurz, learn how to troubleshoot a sewing machine with Ann K. Johnson, fabricate a rippled-pleated edge with Donna Cash and learn how to make an arched PVC rod with Annie Davis.

**SHARE** is what makes this magazine special. It's what Cheryl Strickland, the founder of the original publication known as *SewWhat?*, began in 1993. It's the sharing of knowledge by our readers. Bill Taylor from Rowley Company shares his favorite books, Jennifer Brum talks about customizing slipcovers, Judi Turner brings us the latest trends from the Heimtextil show, Sydney Schwartz-Hardiman explains how to alter patterns and Joanna Braxton takes you on a journey through a country farmhouse transformation.

Become **INSPIRED** by Jenna Abbott's article about becoming a leader and view photos of inspiring window treatments for bay windows by several CHF Forum members. **PROSPER** with tips from Debbie Green on how Facebook can help your business while Sarah Devaney-O'Neil explains how other parts of the social media world works. In this issue you will **MEET** Ann K. Johnson and get a close-up of Diane Preston's workroom.

I am thrilled to be presenting to all of you a wonderful mix of writers and the knowledge they love to share.

Sit back, relax and enjoy this issue.



Margie Nance

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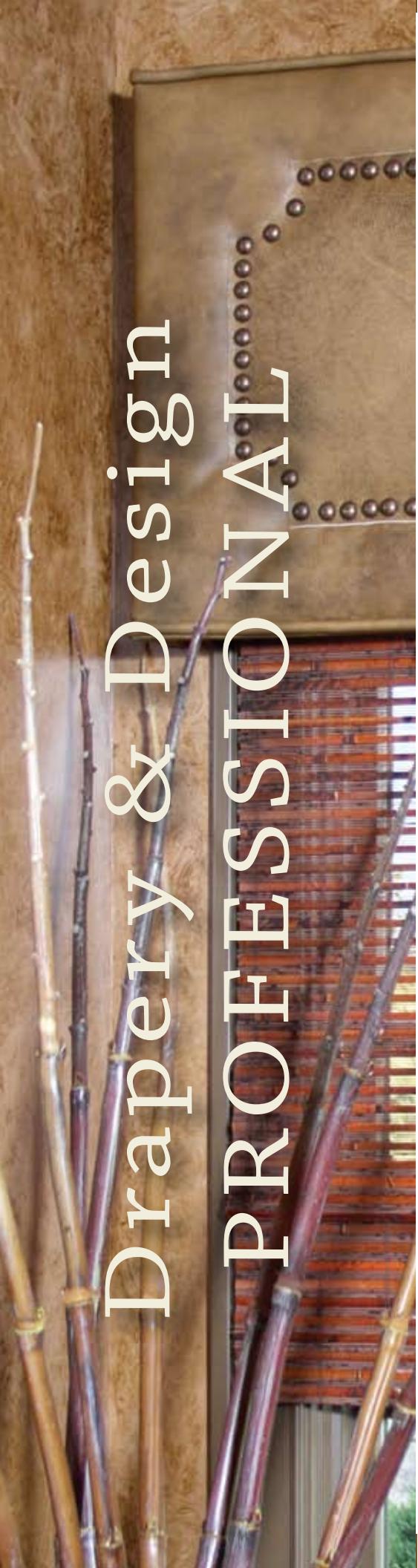


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Cover photo provided by Diane Preston.

The article "What Is Happening to the Roman Shade Industry" in Volume 2010, Issue 1, should have been attributed to Jenna Abbott, Executive Director of WCAA.



# Peek Inside a Workroom

Diane Preston      Murfreesboro, TN



Diane Preston

I have always enjoyed working with my hands. Growing up I constantly had some kind of craft, cross-stitch or crochet project going. My mom and grandmother were avid seamstresses and were very adept at any kind of handwork. They taught me a lot about various types of needlework, but I was never really interested in the sewing machine. I found it too intimidating. That all changed once I got married and I wanted to decorate our first home. My first project after buying a Kenmore sewing machine was to make ruffled curtains for our home. Remember those ruffled curtains from the '80s? I hope those never come back in style. From there on I was hooked on sewing. I then took three years of heirloom sewing classes. As my children grew, I made them all kinds of smocked clothing, intricate dresses and cute jumpers.

While pregnant with my third child in 1991, I was introduced to a designer who needed a seamstress. To my delight, she was graciously willing to apprentice me as her drapery workroom fabricator. My husband set up a worktable for me in our basement with a couple of sawhorses and a covered piece of plywood. The designer taught me how to make panels and flat swags. I was so excited to be able to work from home

and I loved making window treatments. From then on I learned all I could to develop my drapery skills. Back then there weren't the excellent resources available now, so there was a lot of trial and error.

Two years later, in 1993, I was able to purchase my first two commercial machines and a home serger from a workroom that was closing. Diane's Interior Creations was born. I'm so thankful that the Lord opened opportunities for me to work from home while my children were growing up.

Over the years I've worked for several designers, as well as my own clients. Now the vast majority of my work comes from three incredible designers who I've worked with for several years. Our relationships are wonderful, and I'm grateful to work with such talented individuals who allow me to bring their creative high-end design ideas into reality. We've been able to decorate homes in Tennessee, Florida and Alabama. A little more than a year ago, two of the designers and I were able to decorate a show home that won six awards, including Best Window Treatments and Best of Show.

My favorite part of my awesome job is watching the transformation of sketches, bolts of fabrics, trims and hardware into beautiful window treatments, or fabric accessories that delight the designers and home owners. One of the highest compliments I get is "Wow, that turned out better than I thought it would." Diane's Interior Creations is "committed to elegance and



excellence" in every window treatment, bed ensemble, pillow, cushion or fabric accessories made. I also offer decorative hardware and hard window treatments, i.e. blinds, shades, etc. I have a fabulous employee and installer who both make my job much easier.

To anyone who is new to the business I would recommend networking with other workrooms. The WCAA and the WAA (Workroom Association of America) are great ways to do this. I have memberships to both, and also WFCP. It's also important to subscribe to quality magazines and forums for ideas and techniques. *Drapery & Design Professional* has been a tremendous resource for me over the years. I'm a charter subscriber when it started as *Sew What?* in 1993. I've kept all the issues and refer to them often.

I would also recommend to any workroom to always set aside funds to put back into your business. For example, I save all of the profits from the sale of lining and interlining to help grow my business, whether it is equipment (big or small), classes or anything that would be beneficial for the business. By having a reserve set aside, I'm able to take advantage of deals or take care of those necessities as they arise, without blowing the everyday budget.

Over the last three years my business has grown substantially. I am very grateful to the Lord for blessing the growth and for allowing me to have a rewarding profession that I love. You may take a look at more of my work on my Web album at <http://picasaweb.google.com/dianesinteriorcreations>.

## Diane's Top 10 Must-haves for the Workroom

1. Commercial/Industrial straight stitch
2. Commercial/Industrial serger
3. Commercial/Industrial walking foot
4. Boiler iron on a moving track
5. Pneumatic stapler and nailer
6. QuickBooks & Quoting
7. Wolff scissors
8. Workroom Valet
9. Expandable table
10. FabriCaddy

Honorable mentions: Lining/fabric rack and an assortment of metal rulers (36, 48 and 72 inches)

# Workroom Layout

My fabric studio is located in the bonus room of our home where some of the ceilings are slanted — making full wall space scarce and some valuable floor space wasted. My solution was to purchase fabric-covered office room partitions (5x6 feet) from a used office furniture store, and made slipcovers for them. They're placed where they almost reach the slanted ceiling, providing great storage areas behind them. An added bonus is that the dividers have some kind of a batting under the fabric, creating a pin-able surface. I insert a drapery pin upside down into the fabric, bend down the part that would normally go through a drapery ring, and — Presto! — I have a hook for hanging such items as templates, T squares, rulers, etc. If the item doesn't already have a hole for hanging, I put a binder clip on it and then hang it. This surface can also be used to pin up notes and pictures of inspiration.

Behind one of the partitions is a three-level fabric shelf. It keeps fabrics, trims and linings organized and out of the way.

My husband has helped out by building the tables, lining cart, iron track and counter areas in my workroom.

The worktables have drop leaves making them both expandable. The large table is 5x10 feet and can expand out to almost 7x12 foot, and the small one is 5x6 feet and can expand to 5x8 feet. The small table can easily be pushed up against the large table for really long valances or fabric cuts. It can also be turned sideways and then pushed up against the other table for those huge draperies.

The rolling lining cart is awesome. It holds six bolts, three on each side. Each end of the cart has a peg-board where I hang items that I need to get my hands on quickly: extra scissors, stapler, masking tape, clamps, etc. The top of the cart makes a great surface for active work orders.

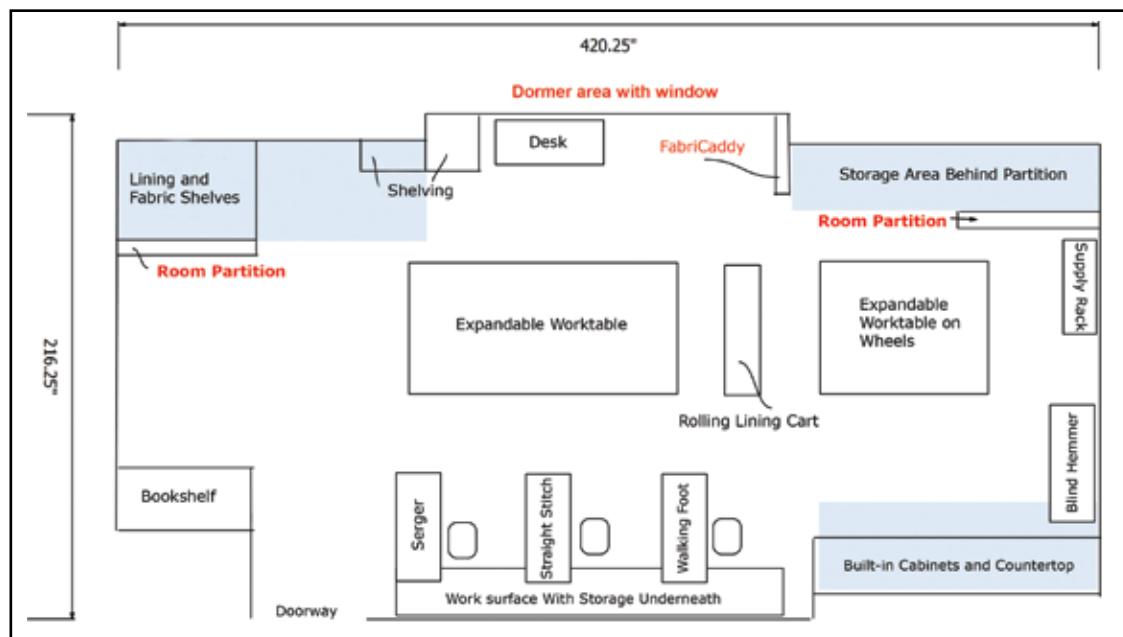
There are tracks that run above both of the worktables. One track is mounted to the ceiling and allows my Reliable boiler iron to slide easily above either table. The other tracks allow my

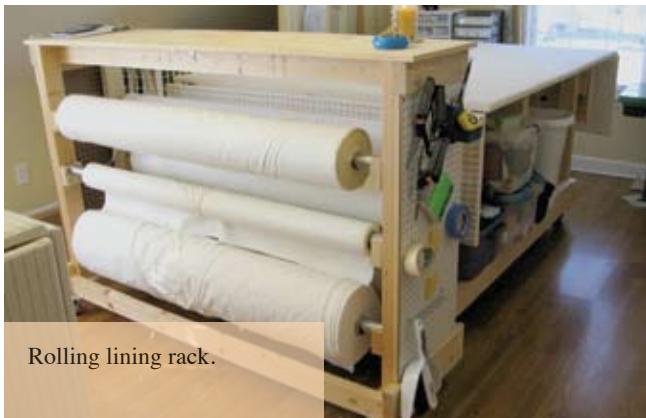
iron to glide and reach anywhere needed on my tables. It's *great*.

The FabriCaddy just fits on the small wall inside the dormer. It ranks in my "top 10 must-haves" in a workroom. It keeps cut fabrics and linings neatly organized waiting to be fabricated, and holds completed draperies awaiting installation. On my caddy I cut fabric tubes a little longer than the length of the movable arms and slide them over the arms. This gives me a wider area for my hanging fabrics, plus a hanger that's larger in diameter to help prevent creasing.

Three of my commercial machines (serger, straight stitch and walking foot) are set into a countertop. I've seen this setup for years, but didn't realize how much more efficient it really does make window treatment fabrication. It also reduces having to wrestle fabric that would otherwise spill onto the floor. The fabric stays more on the counter and slides much easier.

Not shown in the diagram but a must-have in the workroom, I feel, are Scot Robbins' Workroom Valets. I love them. Besides their primary use of mounting treatments, I probably use them more often for another purpose: I place a fabric tube on top of the Valet, lock down the clamps over the tube and extend the legs out for greater stability. It makes a wonderful portable cut-fabric stand. Long cuts of fabric are taken from the worktable and laid over the fabric tube, which is already placed near a sewing machine. The fabric is quickly accessible and organized as construction begins. Once widths are stitched together they're placed back on the rack for the next phase of fabrication. A note of caution: Make sure that the weight is evenly distributed on each side of the tube. Too much weight on one side can cause the Valet to tip. ♦





# Meet The Writers



**Debbie Green** is the owner of Dandelion Interiors and founder of Minutes Matter. Her philosophy is "Systematize your business by doing the same thing the same way." She conducts seminars at D&WC conferences and International Window Coverings EXPOs. She's also a Certified QuickBooks Pro Advisor.



**Jenna Abbott** is the sole proprietor of Sew Elegant by Jenna, a to-the-trade workroom founded in 2001 and located in Sacramento, CA. She's a founding member of the Northern California Chapter of the WCAA, the Executive Director of the National WCAA and a proud alumnus of the Custom Home Furnishings Academy in Charlotte, NC.



**Ann K. Johnson** has owned her home-based wholesale/retail workroom since 1992. She's the author of two books on drawing swag patterns: *The Professional Workroom Handbook of Swags, Volumes 1 & 2*. Ann is a representative for Evan Marsh Designs, creators of dreamDraper and Quick Quote and a specialty instructor at the CHF Academy.



**Joanna Braxton** is the owner of Braxton Drapery Design in Westerville, OH. She's a graduate of the Sheffield School of Interior Design and has been in the window coverings industry for the last 26 years. She's a member of WFCP and WAA, and a board member of the Industry Guidelines panel with WCAA. Her website is [www.braxton-draperydesign.com](http://www.braxton-draperydesign.com)



**Laurie Medford** is the owner of Centsible Creations Inc., in Fenton, MI. With more than 20 years of experience in the window treatment industry and eight years of experience in upholstery, Centsible Creations, Inc., prides itself on creating and fabricating beautiful products. Laurie is an active member of GDWA as well as WCAA. She is a CHF specialty instructor.



**Jennifer Brum** of St. Peters, PA began her career as a partner in a graphic design business in New Orleans. After moving North with her husband, Jennifer worked freelance, creating reproduction signage and illustration. Today she divides her work time between sewing slipcovers, creating large appliquéd fabric murals and creating reproduction signage.



**Susan W. Schurz** has owned Tavern Hill, a professional wholesale custom drapery workroom since 1988 working primarily to the trade. She's an instructor for the CHF Academy. She's the Brand Experience Manager for Rowley Company. Susan is a popular industry speaker and has been featured in many books and magazines. She is a member of the WCAA and a WFCP Expert.



**Donna Cash** operates a workroom in Flowery Branch, GA. She's a 20 year veteran of the window coverings industry and has an associates degree from the Art Institute of Atlanta. She's a WFCP Associate, member of WCAA, Drapery Pro and the Designers Workroom Council in Georgia. Donna is also a certified yoga instructor.



**Sydney Schwartz-Hardiman** is the owner of The Silken Scissor, a retail and wholesale workroom based in Pittsburgh, PA. Sydney is a winner of PA's Best 50 Women in Business and Pittsburgh's Top 40 Under 40. She's also the founder of the Western PA Window Treatment Association. Visit her at [www.TheSilkenScissor.com](http://www.TheSilkenScissor.com) or blog at [www.TheNeedleandTheThread.com](http://www.TheNeedleandTheThread.com).



**Annie Davis** of Elkhorn, NE is the owner of Artisan Designs. This year she celebrates her tenth year as a workroom owner, and is also a member of WFCP and WAA. You can find Annie on the D&D PRO Forum under the screen name of "anniedavis".



**Bill Taylor** is an owner and managing partner of the Rowley Company, serving as the Chief Executive Officer, which is a leading supplier to the window coverings industry. Prior to joining Rowley Company in November 2007, he was Executive Vice President of Microban International Ltd., the branded leader in antimicrobial technology.



**Sarah Devaney-O'Neil** is the owner of Storibook Designs Inc., a custom home-furnishings and design business providing design and advice for both residential and commercial clients. She has 20+ years of leadership experience, including sales training and upper management positions for two large home-furnishings retailers.



**Judi Turner** started her business while in Germany from 1991 to 1992. It began with a client base of expatriates who wanted the American style of window treatments for their German homes. Upon relocating stateside, Judy chose to remain in the home décor field and now, 17 years later, works with clients in several states and three countries.