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Sherry Grindeland / Times staff columnist

Staff lounge gets extreme makeover

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Hazelwood Elementary teachers and staff call it Extreme Makeover.

Unlike the TV show of the same name that fixes up people, this makeover refers to the staff lounge at the Newcastle school. On a recent Monday morning, teachers walked into a transformed room. It went from tattered and battered industrial furniture to designer-modern in one weekend, thanks to the Hazelwood PTA make-a-wish committee.

"Usually the requests are for things like staplers," said co-chair **Jennifer Hiemstra**. "But one staff member wished for new furniture for the staff lounge.

The school is 16 or 17 years old. The furniture had been there from the beginning and it was used when they got it."

Hiemstra; her husband, **Syb Hiemstra**; and make-a-wish co-chair **Debbie Tracey** did the makeover, with help from Jennifer Hiemstra's sister, **Carolyn Gladwell**. She's a vice president with CamWest Development, Inc. The building company had a storage unit filled with slightly used designer furniture left over from model homes. Gladwell gave the makeover team the pick of the lot.

To get weekend access to the school, the team had to share its plans with Hazelwood Principal **Mary Ford**.

"We cleaned up the bulletin boards and painted some tables with chalkboard paint," Hiemstra said. "We brought in three sofas, some chairs and ottomans, lamps and knickknacks."

Ford hung out in the lounge Monday morning to watch the teachers when they arrived.

"It almost brought tears to my eyes," she said.

Some credit, said the team, needs to go to **Lynn Staats**. She's the staff member who made the wish.

Not all wishes are as easy to grant, Hiemstra said.

"We don't have a budget," she said. "When a teacher wishes for a stapler or a pencil sharpener, we go begging to find them."

Ford added that the PTA usually puts its money and efforts into education projects. The group underwrites a school reading program and a computer-learning curriculum.

The makeover effort did have a big impact, she said. "You can't believe how much this improved the staff morale."