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PTA makes over Hazelwood staff lounge

By Christine Emery
New Editor

Just call it “Extreme Makeover: Teachers Lounge Edition.” The Hazelwood Elementary School staff lounge recently got a little swankier, thanks to the efforts of the school’s PTA.

Jennifer Hiemstra, who serves on the Hazelwood Elementary PTA’s Make-a-Wish committee, was informed earlier this year that Hazelwood teachers had grown weary of the tattered and worn industrial furniture in the staff lounge.

Hiemstra happened to have the right connections at the right time to make the wish come true.

Hiemstra’s sister, Carolyn Gladwell, is a Vice President at CamWest Development, developer of Quail Ridge in Newcastle.

Gladwell had a storage unit full of modern designer furniture that she could no longer use in the model homes of her developments, because the furniture was slightly scratched or nicked or because the furniture is no longer considered new. She had intended to sell the furniture to an employee or give it to charity when her sister asked her to make a donation to the school.

“It was everything they needed,” Gladwell said. Gladwell gave the keys to her storage unit to Hiemstra and other PTA volunteers. On a recent Sunday the team emptied the storage unit of an entire living room ensemble and moved it into the teacher’s lounge.

The lounge makeover was a surprise to staff. “I had to keep it a secret,” said Hazelwood Principal Mary Ford. “The staff came in on Monday morning and just ‘oohed and aaahed,’ ” Ford said.

Ford called it a transformation. “Everything else we had was torn and worn and made us feel bad,” she said. “This makes us feel good.”

One of the coffee tables the staff lounge received was painted with a blackboard finish so staff can leave notes to one another using chalk.

Ford said she and other staff were happy and surprised to receive such a gift. “Normally when we make a request, we ask for extra staples or something like that,” she said. “This is so clean and nice.”