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Jane Of the Month

Our *Jane of the Month* feature people who have empowered themselves to pick up a set of tools and turn their house into the home of their dreams! We hope these inspirational stories will move you, enlighten you and give you a little Jane-spiration of your own to turn *blah* into *beautiful* as you tackle the world of home improvement!

Think you can be our next Jane of the Month? Complete our [Jane of the Month form!](#) For past *Jane of the Months*, [see below](#).



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Don't miss Jane tips & tricks, projects, TV & appearance info, and more!



The Janes as seen on



Featured Jane of the Month: March 2006



Name: Sharon Middendorf
Currently resides in: New York, NY
Occupation: Designer, Property Manager & Musician
Favorite Tool: Framing Nailer - it's powerful, strong and a little scary
Project: Restoring and renovating 1920's cottage bungalows

Be Jane Interviews....

Jane: What was your first home improvement project?

Sharon: My very first project was a smaller undertaking – painting our NYC apartment. Our apartment was a very dark red, and there was not much light coming in. I wanted the apartment to feel bright and airy. I decided to redo the apartment to create a completely different mood and paint was the quickest and easiest way to do that. So I bought some white paint and started going at it. I did all the trim in blue-grey -- and even made a terracotta accent wall! It turned out amazing and it gave me the confidence I needed to continue.



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Cottage Before & After

Jane: What is the reason you started doing home improvement projects around your home?

Sharon: My husband and I bought rental cottages in the spring of 2003 and to put it nicely, they were a disgusting mess. However, they were precisely what we had been searching five years to find. I wanted a project that would allow me to do everything: redesign, restore, and renovate. I wanted to be able put my own ideas and feelings into it and this was the project that would let me do all of that! Since we were on a strict financial budget and we found that labor costs were the most expensive part, we had to do all of the labor ourselves. I knew I would learn as I went, possibly mess up, but I was



motivated by wanting see a finished project that reflected my own style!

Jane: Tell us about some of the projects you've done to your home.

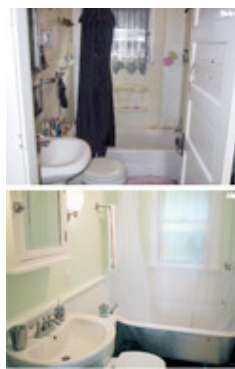
Sharon: I had some water damage to the cabinets in the kitchen (not that they were remotely nice in the first place). So I decided to remove all the top cabinet doors off the cabinets. At first I was a little hesitant, but since I had already done the floor before and it turned out great, I was confident in myself. I sanded the cabinets and doors down, filled in the holes left from the hinges, and painted them. It turned out beautiful! Since I have some colorful bowls and dishes, I left the doors off and it really opened up my small space. I also ripped out the original island because it was too big. I love demolition, it's exhilarating! I then replaced the island with a smaller, more serviceable one that is on wheels.

Jane: What was one of your favorite projects that you've done?

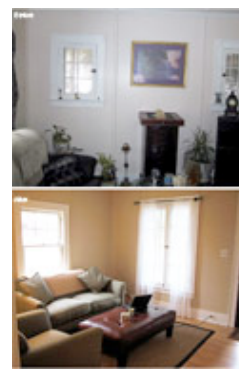
Sharon: One project in particular was restoring our two 1920's claw foot tubs. The feet were all rusty and all the fixtures had to be thrown out, but the enamel was still intact! So I made the decision to clean them up. I silver-leafed the outsides as well as added new brushed-nickel faucets, handles and a shower enclosure. This seemed to do the trick, as we have had nothing but compliments on them ever since – not to mention I love the feeling of extreme gratification of accomplishing something that I had thought was impossible to do.



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Bedroom Before & After



[Click for larger pic](#)
Bathroom Before & After



[click for larger pic](#)
Living Room Before & After

Jane: What is one basic principle that you use when doing home improvement around your house?

Sharon: Use common sense, keep it simple and be detail oriented. It's so easy to complicate things and make them harder than they need to be. I just keep in mind that this isn't rocket science!

Jane: How has home improvement affected your life?

Sharon: WOW, in every way! It's actually given me a whole new purpose in life. It helps me help others, which has really been an amazing experience. I have a ton of friends and people who hear or read about what I've been doing and they call or write to me, and then I help them out with their projects. Home improvement has also given me a real sense of personal gratification. Its like – hey, I did this! For me it's really about the end result and feelings that you can produce from enhancing a space.



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Dining Room Before & After

Jane: How has your doing home improvement affected others in your life?

Sharon: My close girlfriends and family members seem to be genuinely inspired by what I've done! Not to mention that my husband has a newfound respect for me. I also love how those closest to me are out there doing it too! They're doing everything from buying homes and renovating them, to turning them into vacation properties. It's like a domino effect of people feeling confident in what they can accomplish.

Jane: What is it about home improvement that inspires you?

Sharon: It's so creative! Being creative is something that I have to have in my life and it's so amazing to actually see something that's only been in your mind and then finally see it through to fruition. You just can't get better than that! I now have that extra confidence that I didn't have had before doing home improvement.

Jane: What words of encouragement or advice would you give to a Jane just getting started in home improvement?

Sharon: Have no fear! Take it and run with it. It takes a lot of organization, determination and multi-tasking but you can do it. Go for it, and best of luck!

Past Janes...



February 2006

Jane of the Month: Lori Finter

Home town: Memphis, TN

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January 2006

Jane of the Month: Karen Zieba

Home town: Long Beach, CA

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April 2005

Jane of the Month: Irene Crow

Home town: Pleasanton, California

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November 2005

Jane of the Month: Georgette Rinker-Butcher

Home town: Indianapolis, Indiana

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March 2005

Jane of the Month: Mechel Boen

Home town: South Bend, Indiana

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October 2005

Jane of the Month: Brooke Coe

Home town: Long Beach, CA

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February 2005

Jane of the Month: Paula Willis

Home town: Los Angeles, California

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August 2005

Jane of the Month: Shannon Tucker

Home town: Atlanta, GA

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January 2005

Jane of the Month: Brigitte Byrd

Home town: Lawton, Oklahoma

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