

Initiative Gears Up to Change Lives with Color

Color can change your mood, your outlook and possibly even your life, suggests Daniel Wittenkeller, founder of Color Cares, a grassroots initiative that wants to offer paint makeovers to those in need of a new beginning. Still in the formative stages, Color Cares' mission is to help others through the uplifting and healing power of color.

To achieve this mission, Wittenkeller is organizing a national network of volunteers to change the look and feel of a home or facility for those suffering from traumatic loss, injury or illness.

"It's kind of like 'Extreme Makeover' Lite," he quipped, referring to the popular television show that provides total home makeovers for needy and deserving families. "But rather than helping just one family per week, we might be able to help thousands."

Potential makeover recipients potentially could include returning war veterans, widows or families of fallen soldiers, senior centers, domestic violence shelters and healthcare facilities.

Wittenkeller is soliciting volunteers for the nonprofit on Twitter



Color Cares solicits volunteers and sponsors

and through an online application at <http://colorcares.org>. He hopes by the end of 2011 to have work crews established in cities throughout the United States comprising color consultants, decorators and interior designers, stagers and, most importantly, professional painters who are licensed,

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bonded and insured. Crews will operate within their individual communities to assess and then complete the painting jobs of approved applicants.

"I don't want to fly in a painter from Los Angeles to do a makeover in Chicago. I want local people to receive the benefits of helping someone in their community and changing lives," Wittenkeller said. Already, many volunteer workers have stepped up to help. "It's unbelievable how many people in the paint and decorating business have come forward saying, 'I definitely want to be part of this. What can I do?'" he added.

Wittenkeller also is actively solic-

iting corporate sponsors from companies inside as well as outside the decorating products industry. At press time, a major U.S. corporation had expressed interest, but Wittenkeller is looking to pick up other sponsors, too, including paint companies. He reported that sponsors and volunteers will receive recognition in the press and in signage posted at each makeover site as well as the satisfaction of knowing they are helping to improve people's lives.

With sponsors in place, Color Cares likely will be expanded to encompass larger makeovers involving more than paint. "We plan to do one feature makeover per month that might include furniture provided by a furniture store, cabinets from a kitchen and bath store, etc.," Wittenkeller reported.

A Background in Color

Wittenkeller knows a thing or two about color. He also is the founder of Tru-Hue Paint Color Solutions as well as RoomVues.com.

Tru-Hue was born out of Wittenkeller's frustration with trying to choose paint colors for his home. He found that existing paint chips and pint-size sample colors didn't help. The chips were too small, and the samples too limiting since once a color was painted on the wall it couldn't be repositioned.

Wittenkeller decided to paint samples on poster and foam board that he could move around the room to see the color on different walls and at different angles. The boards were better but not ideal. Wittenkeller researched and tested several materials and eventually launched Tru-Hue Paint Color Test Boards, offered at www.truhue.com. The boards are sturdier than traditional poster board, won't curl like foam board and are not as heavy and brittle as drywall, which contractors often use when creating samples for

their customers.

Tru-Hue boards currently are offered in a variety of sizes, from large poster-size boards to 6-by-6-inch boards that end users can conveniently carry in a handbag while shopping for wallpaper, window treatments and other complementary products. The line also includes revolutionary boards that fold in the middle so they can be positioned in corners or on a ceiling and abutting wall to help find the perfect accent color.

RoomVues.com, meanwhile, offers a unique color consultation service online at <http://roomvues.com>. The site allows browsers to send digital photos of their projects, a description of their color dilemma and, if desired,

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the name of their favorite brand of paint. In return for a \$24.95 fee for interior projects and \$34.95 for exterior, customers receive color suggestions and their project photos "painted" in the new color-scheme suggestions. According to Wittenkeller, thousands of consumers have used the service, including restaurants, salons, offices and even a Saudi prince asking for help with his palace.

The site additionally has an ever-expanding gallery of residential and commercial projects that browsers can sort through to find color schemes that appeal to them. The gallery comprises photos of completed projects sent to RoomVues.com by satisfied customers, interior decorating professionals, smaller niche paint companies and painting contractors. Each image includes pertinent color information.

"To date, this is the only gallery on the Internet that lists the paint brands and color names used in every posted

photo regardless of brand," Wittenkeller said. Due to the vast number of registered users in more than 120 countries, RoomVues.com is an ideal portal for paint brands to show off their color palettes, he added.

Deserving Applicants

Wittenkeller envisions that both Tru-Hue and RoomVues.com might be used in the Color Cares initiative. Applicants could browse RoomVues' gallery to get an idea about which colors appeal to them, he said, while work crews could use Tru-Hue boards to make sure applicants truly were happy with their decisions.

To apply or nominate someone for a Color Cares makeover, interested par-

ties must fill out an application, available at <http://colorcares.org>. Each application will be judged on several factors, Wittenkeller reported, including need.

"We're not looking to turn people away, but we do need to determine if their need is real," he said. "Once we determine that the applicant is deserving, then we'll forward the project to a team leader in the area so that the leader can go out and do a closer inspection to determine what the job (entails)."

Wittenkeller doesn't anticipate that many people will nominate themselves for a makeover. Like "Extreme Makeover," Color Cares undoubtedly will serve as a vehicle for people to help their families, friends and neighbors.

Of course, Color Cares can't help everyone in need. But Wittenkeller wants to help as many people as possible and believes that color is a good place to start. "All we want to do is use it as a tool to help people begin to turn their lives around," he said. ■