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Next stop Chicago: Fluff Your Stuff trio is rolling out organizing, green services

by Michelle Leach

Fluffing is about rearranging furniture, art and accessories to make the most of what homeowners already have — and that Omaha-grown concept is blowing into the Windy City, as Fluff Your Stuff Interior Redesign opens its first out-of-state location. Identifying and incorporating the client's style is a key fluff philosophy — no matter how bizarre the client's requests may seem, Founder Lorrie Williams said.

"We have these clients who had a collection of porcelain heads of historical figures, poets, pirates and actors," Williams said. "They wanted those heads worked into the design, so we had to figure out where to hang the heads."

They ended up hanging the heads in bathroom.

"We made it fun and whimsical," she said. "It's their home, so we take what people love and make them love it even more."

Fluff Your Stuff has been arranging what people love in fresh, new ways since 2003. The full service design firm wasn't necessarily formed by design, Williams said.

She was working as a creative arts director for a mega-church in Fort Worth, Tex., when people started coming to her for advice on paint colors or picking out new sofas.

"I wasn't planning to change my job," Williams said. "I started charging so people would stop asking."

That didn't work. People still asked.

"Once people were willing to pay for the service we thought, 'OK. I guess we have a business,'" she said.

Williams moved back to Omaha and teamed up with her good friend, Joy Johnson, a tech-driven designer whose projects included designing homes for those with disabilities.

"I was ready to do something fun," Johnson said. "I was burnt out from codes and specs."

In 2006 Jessica Duce called Fluff Your Stuff for help with a room in her home.

"I needed a fresh eye — I was stuck," she said.

The trio clicked. Duce was hired as a design assistant and became a partner last year.

Now the firm's 9-member design team touts more than 78 years experience and 11 memberships in professional organizations, according to its Web site.

The 'fluffosophy' as they call it is 'decorating for real life,' Williams said.

"We believe people should live in their homes and not just have it prepped for a magazine shoot all the time," she said. "Our philosophy is to bring in high-impact pieces and to fill in the rest of the space with things that are very

cost-effective."

Williams likens most people's homes to a little black dress that doesn't really wow until the right jewelry, shoes and makeup pull it all together.

"Rooms are like that — they have the bones but they need the jewelry to make it sing," she said.

Glancing at many before and after photos, rooms are the same yet different — a large, ornate clock that had been shoved in the corner is now a focal point, drab wood chairs were replaced with black leather ones (yet the table and cabinets remain), and a bare wall pops with a splash of orange paint.

"Sometimes all you need is a couple of hours to get good, basic advice from a designer and a lot of times people can do a lot themselves," Johnson said. "Just to get them on the right track, so they don't keep making

Fluff Your Stuff Interior Redesign

Phone: 490-1884

Founded: 2003

Employees: 9

Services: interior design for home and office

Goals: Launch Chicago location. License Fluff Your Stuff and expand to other states. Team up with a manufacturer to launch an attractive recycling center. Continue to step up green efforts. Offer professional organizing service.

Industry outlook: The economy is prompting homeowners to remodel or revamp their home, whereas in better conditions they may have bought a new home. Commercial is also on the upswing as businesses look to restyle what they have to project a confident image during times of struggle.

Web site: www.fluffyourstuff.com



From left, partners Lorrie Williams, Jessica Duce and Joy Johnson ... Brand of creative, cost-effective decorating branches out nationally, has designs to introduce attractive and functional recycling center and organizational services.

the same mistakes — like buying furniture that is too big for a space."

Many people may not even know their style, so Fluff designers recommend clients do their homework, creating a file of fabrics and photos that they like.

"We'll take those things and say, 'Did you see the notice all the wood has a very natural finish or all the furniture is very contemporary?'" Johnson said. "We pare it down."

The fluff team is branching their results-driven yet practical approach to other states. They're actively looking to license Fluff Your Stuff in Iowa, and they're just a little paperwork away from opening a store in Chicago's Gold Coast area.

"We were approached by a woman that was relocating to Chicago who is very talented and creative," Duce said. "After a long interview process we felt that she would be a great test market to try Fluff in Chicago."

Though the Fluff team is no stranger to green decorating, Duce said they're taking green solutions to the next level.

They're working with contractors to incorporate wallpaper and carpet recycling, zero-VOC paint and Energy Smart light bulbs.

Duce said they're also looking for a manufacturer to launch a functional and attractive recycling center.

"A lot of things that are green may not be pretty, so you have to balance those two things," Williams said. "We've been working on an attractive recycling center that people could have in their homes that doesn't look like something you might find in a state park."

Fluff Your Stuff is also introducing professional organizing services, and plans to host their version of Parade of Homes — an 'Organized for Real Life' home tour — this spring.

But it's not just homes that are getting the special fluff treatment, as more businesses are reaching out to them, Williams said.

"They want their businesses to appear successful," she said. "They don't want to look like they're struggling in times like this, so people are putting a little more money in their business to make others feel confident that they can trust doing business with them."

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