

## Design for How We Live Now

Interior design for real life: Pet-friendly, kid-friendly, family-friendly.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
GAZETTE

**D**eborah Wiener isn't turned-off by a messy house or pets of any size or shape. In fact, it is the kind of challenge that she wants to tackle. The interior designer considers herself a specialist "in real life, pet-friendly, family-friendly design."

So when Carlene Stephens approached her to get help decorating her Alexandria home, Wiener was in her element. Stephens and her husband Gary Sturm live with two Great Danes who have free rein of the house. She was searching for stylish but durable pieces that would accommodate both her active household and desire for fashionable furniture.

"I was so tired of having messed-up furniture or no furniture at all," said Stephens.

Sturm and Stephens had completed a home renovation project and added an open kitchen, dining and family room space. Wiener came up with a design for the room that took the couple's desire for style and durability into consideration.

"She began with a rug," said Stephens. "And the other furniture was chosen around it."

Wiener designed the room by choosing substantial furnishings that were chic but sensible and able to stand up to everything from sharp claws to muddy paws. She included pieces from Slobproof!, Wiener's own line of furniture that is made from a

fabric called Crypton. The designer says it is virtually indestructible and can be easily cleaned.

Wiener started with a grey area rug with large circular patterns in shades of blue and yellow, and added a blue sofa and matching arm chair. She completed the look with two gray dining chairs and a gray ottoman that also serves as a coffee table.

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For one couple, furniture that can stand up to life with two Great Danes.

PHOTOS BY  
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The living room of the Mansfield home in Chantilly. On the sofa are 6-year-old twins Will and Josie Mansfield.

### Wiener's Tips for Active Households

- ◆ Laminate your most heavily used dining chairs. Almost any fabric can be laminated. Just ask your fabric store or decorator where to send it. New flat finish laminations provide an invisible, moisture- and stain-proof barrier on fabric, making it virtually indestructible and inconspicuous, too.
  - ◆ Protect wood finishes from wet glasses, hot cups and scratching with clear glass tops made to fit your table tops. Sure, you'll have to wipe them, but you'll protect what's underneath from everything your slob may put on top.
  - ◆ Nothing lasts longer or looks better than a well-finished hardwood floor. Wiener recommends durable wool rugs as well.
  - ◆ For family-friendly furniture, you can't beat protected leather.
- For more see [www.mydesigningsolutions.com](http://www.mydesigningsolutions.com)

# Slobproof!

PHOTOS BY MARILYN CAMPBELL



Color was one of her secret weapons. "Color is camouflage, but beige is like having another child in the house. It needs protecting and watching," said Wiener. "Get out of the beige rut and use color to camouflage spills and stains."

Stephens said her furniture has already passed one important test.

"When the furniture arrived my dog had just taken a drink from his water bowl and was dropping water on the new sofa. It was like watching Niagara Falls coming from this Great Dane's mouth. I wiped it up quickly with no evidence that [the water] had been there."

Wiener said the goal is to design spaces that match the realities of life.

"I am not your typical designer," she said. "I am not there to judge a client's budget or taste. I am there to give them advice to make their lives better."

Wiener's advice also comes in the form of unconventional design tools such as "Wite-Out" and permanent ink markers. "Keep 'Wite-Out' on hand at all times," said Wiener. "It may be obsolete for correcting typos, but it's a miracle when it comes to camouflaging dings and scuff marks wherever you have white trim around your house — like door frames, baseboard molding or chair rails. Permanent ink markers can cover a lot of dings and scratches."

Melinda Mansfield says that she has one of the most active households in her Chantilly neighborhood. She and her husband Rob have 6-year-old twins, two dogs and three cats.



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Winkle Nemeth with her dogs Sid (black) and Annie in her McLean living room.

"I have a face painting and glitter tattoo business for children," said Mansfield. "I am the troop leader for my daughter's Girl Scout troop and my husband is the leader of our son's Boy Scout troop. All the kids in the neighborhood come to my house to play."

Mansfield says that she likes a lively household, but not the mess that often comes with the territory. She wanted to decorate her home to accommodate the chaos without sacrificing style. "I like really nice things," said Mansfield. "I always have. I wanted a fresh, clean look with good fabrics that will stand the test of time."

When Mansfield found interior designer Wiener, she knew that she'd found a good match. Wiener came up with a design for the home's living room and lower level that took Mansfield's desire for style and durability into consideration.