

Making a House a Home

Cynthia Massarsky helps furnish homes for people in need

WRITTEN BY DEIRDRE FLANAGAN WARD

There's no place like home. Tenafly resident and director of Making-It-Home, Cynthia Massarsky, 65, makes it her mission to assist those in need to create a safe and comfortable environment they can call home.

Making-It-Home is a public/private partnership that works with companies and nonprofit agencies in Bergen County to deliver donated furniture to low-income individuals, families, veterans and people with disabilities who are leaving emergency shelter and moving to new apartments.

Massarsky explains how she became involved in volunteer work and her growing passion for giving back. "I believe in the voluntary sector and in trying to nourish its growth. I grew up with the mindset of giving back, of sharing what talents you have with those less fortunate or simply with others who might benefit in an important way."

While at Cornell, she studied operations and financial planning with the intent to utilize her education to benefit society. "Throughout my career I played a significant role in pioneering innovative business models, such as corporate social responsibility, for-profit venturing/social enterprise and scaling top-performing nonprofits," she says.

As for her ability to balance many projects simultaneously, she credits her parents as examples. "My parents laid the groundwork for who I am and how I do what I do," she says. "Among many things, my mother taught me how to multi-task and my father taught me how to fix things. He would say if you thought about a challenge differently and got inventive, there was always a way to get the job done."

Massarsky brings these tools and her nonprofit experience to her current cause, Making-It-Home. "A few years ago, after having completed my last consulting assignment, I began thinking about what would be next. Not yet ready to retire, I decided to create a program that would combine my knowledge and experience in the nonprofit sector with my interest in interior design," she says. "You wouldn't think the two go together, but that's how I came up with Making-It-Home. It is the sum total of my knowledge over a 42-year career."

How To Help

For more information or to become a part of the **Making-It-Home** endeavor, contact Cynthia Massarsky at cmassarsky@making-it-home.org or visit making-it-home.org.



SPECIAL DELIVERY Cynthia Massarsky loads the delivery truck with donated items to be dropped off at a local residence.

From her consulting work, she knows most low-income people leaving emergency shelters and moving into new apartments do not have furniture. She believes a comfortable home

environment would encourage independence, increase self-sufficiency, and reduce the chance they'd become homeless again.

"From my personal life, I knew many people who were redecorating, downsizing or needed to dispose of possessions. So it seemed

logical to put the two goals together and find a way to bring these unwanted items to those who really need them," she says.

Massarsky claims the idea is not new, however the way it's executed is, at least in Bergen County. "We figured out a way to make it work and to join forces with the Volunteer Center of Bergen County, where we're now one of their programs," she says. "It's a perfect collaboration. Making-It-Home works with a corps of volunteers – individuals, civic organizations, and private sector companies – to get the job done." ■

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