

# Home SWEETER Home



**Words by Lisa Patterson**  
**Photos by Kristina Wunsch**



**When Lisa Blackmore of Tacoma opened her inbox in March, she couldn't believe her eyes. TREE, a local eco-home furniture boutique — which was offering one family a home makeover — had chosen hers. ¶ “OH MY STARS!!! This is just unbelievable,” she typed back. Blackmore, a Tacoma artist and entrepreneur, wife, and mother, was beyond thrilled. She looked around her home and wondered what the designers at TREE would do. Hopefully, take away the hand-me-down orange couch that had seen better days. ¶ “I seriously thought it would be so cool to just get a new couch,” she said. “And what we got? ... Oh my, so much more.”**





The reclaimed pine sideboard is perfect for storing the family's photo albums, games, and art supplies. It also proved to be a great hiding space during a recent round of hide and seek!

When TREE founder Nicole Wakley and her team arrived at the small and sweet Craftsman, they met with the whole family — husband Morgan, and the kids — and took a look around. She listened to them — what they liked about their home, what they wanted to change. Even the children chimed in. Lisa was fond of blues and turquoise. There was Grandma's antique dresser that was a keeper, and the table Morgan's father got from a thrift shop in San Francisco in the 1970s. "That table has followed me around my whole life," he said. "Dad always said there was a leaf inside, but it never worked. We didn't believe it."

Lisa and the kids went to TREE and fell for the most comfortable couch, stuffed with organic materials. The cushions came complete with slipcovers that could be thrown in the washing machine — and replaced if need be.

TREE wanted to do a \$25,000 makeover contest not only to get the word out about

its unique company in Tacoma, but also because the company is big on giving back. TREE has planted 77,000 trees globally to date, and partners with nonprofits like NW Furniture Bank and Forterra. It advertised the contest late last year online and in *South Sound* and *425* magazines. The TREE team wanted to see photos and hear about *why* people wanted a home makeover. Lisa's email stood out. She said she was a local photographer and foster parent who had too many pics of her adorable kids with that orange couch as an unwitting backdrop.

"TREE fell in love with the light heart and humor of Lisa's entry. When she said she was dying to get rid of her, 'ugly, orange couch,' we knew we had to help her do it," Wakley said. "The photos Lisa shared of her family were so heartwarming, and we could tell that her home was her favorite place to photograph. There is so much love there."

The TREE team's goal after meeting the family was to "create a home sanc-



The hand-me-down furniture, including the orange couch, was replaced by TREE, and donated to the NW Furniture Bank in Tacoma.

tuary with aesthetic beauty that inspires her photography, and pieces that are beautiful from the inside-out for the health and happiness of the family.”

In the living room, the TREE team brought in the sectional Lisa and the kids were drawn to in the showroom, as well as a reclaimed wooden coffee table that has softly rounded edges so it’s kid-friendly, too. Plus, it’s durable for arts and crafts and life, and large enough for family game nights. A reclaimed pine sideboard and beautified antique rug complete the room. Perhaps the neatest thing is that every piece is so “them” that their home doesn’t feel overly styled — it feels authentically Blackmore. The TREE items and theirs weave together so fluidly, the homeowners almost can’t even believe it. “They are good,” Morgan said.

But Wakley and her team didn’t stop there — if you meet Wakley, you’ll understand why. She is so passionate about what she does.







The TREE team took the Blackmores' master bedroom to another level by bringing in a wooden bed, turquoise rug, and a salvaged metal suitcase for storage (and super-funky style).







So the TREE team brought in pieces for the kids' rooms — a place for homework to be done in one, and cartoon drawings to be made in the other, and colorful stools, and reclaimed letters to spell their names.

In the master bedroom, the couple had their mattress “on the metal frame the set came with,” said Lisa. Now they have a beautiful bed frame from sustainably-sourced walnut. Other thoughtfully curated finds from TREE’s collection connect the space in practical and romantic ways, like with the salvaged cracker tin turned candleholder, and an antique suitcase turned storage space for Dad.

Wakley, a former attorney from London, founded TREE in 2005 while in Hong Kong. Her vision was to bring together contemporary design and traditional handcraftsmanship and create (and rescue) timeless furniture. She fell in love with design and garnered awareness about sustainability and style while traveling the world. She lived in Australia on a farm for a time when her family was young.

Now her growing furniture company can be found in the United States in Tacoma, and at a new location in Bellevue.

In true TREE style, the Blackmores’ previous furniture was donated to the NW Furniture Bank in Tacoma, a nonprofit that donates furniture to those in need. And that orange sofa — it likely will appear in another family’s photographs, and it likely will be loved or even loathed once again.

“I love getting carried away,” said Wakley, sitting on the Blackmores’ living room floor, admiring the beautiful area rug with her hands as her eyes danced around the newly designed space that came out perfectly, if you ask the family.

And that old table Morgan’s dad always *said* had a leaf inside? Well, the TREE team restored and fixed it, and indeed it does have a leaf — and now the table functions, and doesn’t wobble. It’s back at the Blackmores’ home. Its story, like many things the TREE team touches, will continue with the next generation. The table is timeless, like all good furniture can and should be. ■