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Identifying &
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Dates in
Columbia

MEET REAL MOM
Darci Strickland



a place to play



The Thomson family's Columbia home was designed by interior designer Pam McPeak of Southern Places when the family moved into it a couple of years ago. But one large, cavernous room remained untouched, and Katie Thomson decided she wanted it to be a playful and cozy spot for her three children, ages 4, 3, and 1. Katie gave the designer free rein, only making two requests: that the space fit her children's current needs but have the capability to transform in functionality as the children hit their tweens, and that the room incorporate a touch of whimsy while melding with the traditional décor of the rest of the house.

"Pam was the mastermind of the concept and now the playroom is the favorite place in the house for everyone," says Katie.

To add merriment in the room, McPeak used the children's larger toys – a stuffed bear, grocery cart, and trucks, for example – as design elements in the room, playing off the toys' inherent colorfulness to coordinate with shades of lettuce green and periwinkle and coral red on the walls, floor, and built-in cabinetry. McPeak designed an entire wall of cubbies and drawers around two existing windows under a playhouse "roof" complete with a flat screen TV, white willow baskets she sourced at the exact size needed to fit cubbies,

and tiny closets to house dress-up clothes. A nearby sleeper sofa is perfect for overnight visits by Mom-Mom.

On the other side of the playroom, loads of bookcase space, brightened and topped with a backlit, stained glass "READ" sign, is anchored with a Pottery Barn kid-sized table with an art paper roll for coloring and drawing. The resulting artwork is rotated through a gallery of white frames on the wall, where Katie can quickly tack and untack them in the glass-less frames as the children produce new pieces. In the adjacent corner, a custom-made abacus and US map purchased from Land of Nod are featured beside another built-in storage unit.

Touches of whimsy in the form of colorful pillows, toy vignettes, bubble-style carpeting, and bright bookcases are subtly neutralized by the addition of "grown up" touches of black in lamps and toile roller shades.

McPeak planned the fun, elementary vibe to remain pertinent as the children age, with an eye to transforming the storage units to house video gaming equipment and software instead of toys and space for additional seating and a mini refrigerator when friends come over to visit.

"It's a functional space even though it's kid-driven and kid-centered," says Katie. "The room is fun now but will grow with them. On the rainiest of days in the throes of winter, the kids can walk in and feel happy."

Thomson Playroom Specifications

All paints produced by Pittsburgh Paint & Glass (PPG):

Walls – *Blue Shamrock*

Bookcases – *Red Cedar*

Beadboard – *Easter Egg*

Knob Accents – *Lettuce Alone*

Aqua carpet is from the *Sweet Sixteen Collection* by Prince Street House.

Interior Designer: Pam McPeak, ASID,
of Southern Places, Inc.,
www.southernplacesinc.com



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