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MEMBER PROFILE - DECEMBER 2000

Bethany Portner

Bethany Portner, president of Portner Design Group, Inc., specializes in interior design for homes, offices and the public areas in condos (lobbies, elevators and corridors). Taking pride in being “user friendly,” Bethany listens carefully when clients tell or show her what they like or dislike. Working to understand how her clients want their space to look and feel, she also “gets messages from the architecture, which must be respected if the design scheme is to work successfully.”

Bethany, who has been creating beautiful interiors for almost 30 years, loves “watching a project develop” and feels “immediate gratification” when clients are pleased with her efforts. “Every client is different and every space is different,” says Bethany, who takes care to avoid imposing her own design preferences on clients. Bethany takes on projects of all kinds -- comfortable, durable, easy-care family rooms; well-functioning kitchens; inviting, livable living rooms; and attractive and efficient home offices.

Praised for being “non-intimidating,” Bethany respects clients’ budgets as well as their taste. “One of my most important jobs as a designer,” she says, “is to help clients avoid making expensive mistakes.” Noting, that “just because times are good doesn’t mean that people are not cost conscious,” Bethany says many clients today may be willing to spend a bit more for a special piece they love. However, they want to make sure that they are getting good value for their money. People are better shoppers today! Another change in recent years is the fact that clients want to use all the areas of their homes. The formal, “look-but-don’t-touch” type of room is out. All areas must be attractive but practical as well.

Because the Portner Design Group always enjoys an interesting mix of assignments, Bethany is never bored. Many of her projects are currently related to helping people accommodate to changes in their lives. Some couples, now “empty nesters,” are refurbishing their homes -- finally -- after twenty years spent devoting all their efforts to their children’s education. Other clients have enlisted Bethany’s help in “downsizing” -- moving from a big home to a much smaller condominium. Bethany will measure all the existing furniture and then, considering those pieces which mean the most to them, help her clients decide what to take and which pieces must be replaced, reupholstered or refinished.

An enthusiastic WBO member, Bethany is a past president of our organization. She also chairs the Legislative Liaison Committee and is WBO’s representative to the Committee for Montgomery.