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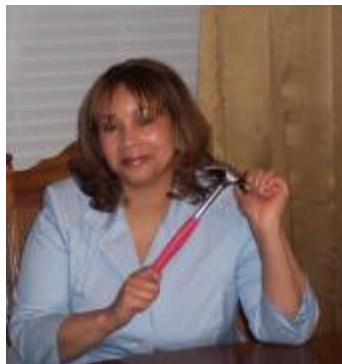
## It's no longer a man's world in fix-it-uppers

Women hear the basics in workshops

By JEN CHRISTENSEN  
For the Journal-Constitution  
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Nakia Smith was unusually anxious when she bought her first home. Her worries weren't financial — they were purely decorative.

"A new home is a clean slate, and I didn't know how to decorate," the 31-year-old Snellville resident said. "I'm a neutral person, but my friends told me those colors were too boring. So I always bring someone along to shop with me, so I don't second-guess myself."



Courtesy of Bridget Mashore  
(ENLARGE)

True to form, she did second-guess herself when she went shopping without her usual "designated decorator." Instead of buying something in the browns and beiges she likes, she ended up with a brick-red couch.

"I got home, worried about it for a few days, and canceled the order," Smith said. "My mom says I'm the only person she knows who takes back furniture."

But life is different now for Smith. She recently went to a store and without hesitation picked out a red and gold comforter. It's still on her bed. A new light fixture she bought on her own for the bathroom is ready to be installed.

What's the secret to Smith's transformation? She took classes from DIY (Do-It-Yourself) DIVA, a new business aimed at giving women enough confidence to undertake home improvement projects. With their help, Smith says she's become a DIY Diva, "or at least a baby DIY Diva anyway," she adds sheepishly.

Carol Carter, founder and director of operations for DIY DIVA.

DIY DIVA holds Saturday morning classes at the Brookhaven Center on Peachtree Road. Trained contractors teach women and their friends a variety of home improvement skills — how to install a toilet, lay a tile floor, landscape, or decorate, to name only a few of the options. The classes have become so popular that DIY DIVA will soon offer weeknight classes, sessions targeted at seniors and classes for young girls.

### DIY DIVA WORKSHOPS

- **When:** Every Saturday, with weekday evening classes to come.
- **Where:** 4362 Peachtree Road N.E.
- **Cost:** \$30.
- **Web site:** [www.diydiva.com](http://www.diydiva.com)
- **Phone:** 678-908-3684.

Carol Carter, who started DIY DIVA, said she's pleased with the expansion plans, especially since DIY DIVA has been around for less than a year. Carter opened DIY DIVA after struggling with her own fixer-upper issues.

"I guess DIY has always been a man or boy thing. Tools and women are sort of taboo," Carter said. "But I want to change all that, especially since there are so many single women who own homes these days."

Carter says she noticed many women are addicted to HGTV and home improvement shows, but watching is not enough for most women. Many don't even know the basics. And that means they can't glean enough by just asking questions from the clerk at the home improvement store like many men can.

"Women learn differently than men. They want to touch it, feel it, they want to ask questions," Carter said. "They want to take notes, but they can't do it in a store that's chaotic and oftentimes they don't have enough help on the

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floor, so it's hard for them to get the attention they need."

DIY DIVAS classes begin with the basics. The instructors, many of whom are contractors and small business owners, all undergo extra female-friendly training.

"We teach them to respect women's space, don't call them gals, simple things but things that can make women feel comfortable in class," Carter said.

Another of her goals: Even if a women decides not to do a project herself, the class will give her more confidence about hiring a contractor.

Smith took DIY Diva's class on budget decorating last fall and got ideas on what kind of décor would fit with her preferences. She liked the class so much she took one the following weekend on turning your bathroom into a spa retreat. Now when she takes a bath, she relaxes with serene paint colors on the walls, Zen garden-like rocks around the tub, and aromatherapy candles.

"My mother, who is a great decorator, worried that I was taking so long to decorate when I first bought the house," Smith said.

"But after the class, when she came up from Texas a few months ago, she took one look around at all that I'd done and told me how proud she was about all my progress."

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