

SATURDAY, AUGUST 14, 2004 • SECTION E



For her 12th birthday, Kayla Sowards wanted a change for her bedroom. Her mother, Tiffany, an interior designer, gave her a tropical retreat.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIM DOMINICK/THE STATE

Growth spurt

's bedroom turns corner with mom's makeover

By MEGAN SEXTON
Staff Writer

AS KAYLA SOWARDS approached her 12th birthday, she had a request to mark the occasion.

"I didn't want any presents. I was sick of clothes," said the sixth grader at Crossroads Middle School in Irmo.

What she wanted was a new look for her room. She was moving out of the little kid-stage and wanted something a little cooler than her pastel walls and puppy posters.

And it helped that her mother, Tiffany Sowards, is an interior designer.

The two transformed her bedroom and bathroom into a tropical retreat, with a wall mural of the sun setting over the ocean and bamboo palm trees.

"She's in that transitional phase where you don't want to be a little kid anymore but want to hang on to some stuff," Sowards said. "When she's 15, I think this room will still be good."

Sowards wanted the window treatments to look like the roof of a thatched hut. At the top of the window, she built a wooden frame and covered it with a table cloth made for a Hawaiian-theme party.

"I cut, folded stapled and nailed it. It was hard," she said.

Underneath the wood, she attached a strip of lighting sold for underneath kitchen cabinets. On the outside, she attached a string of party lights. A bamboo screen adds the finishing touch.

In the corners and other spots around the room, large pieces of bamboo reach toward the ceiling, topped with cuttings from the palm plants in the yard.

Birthday shopping trips with grandparents added accessories like lucky bamboo, an alarm clock that plays ocean sounds, fish for a small aquarium and a hamper.

"The room is functional, bright and will grow with her," her mom said. "It really fits her personality."

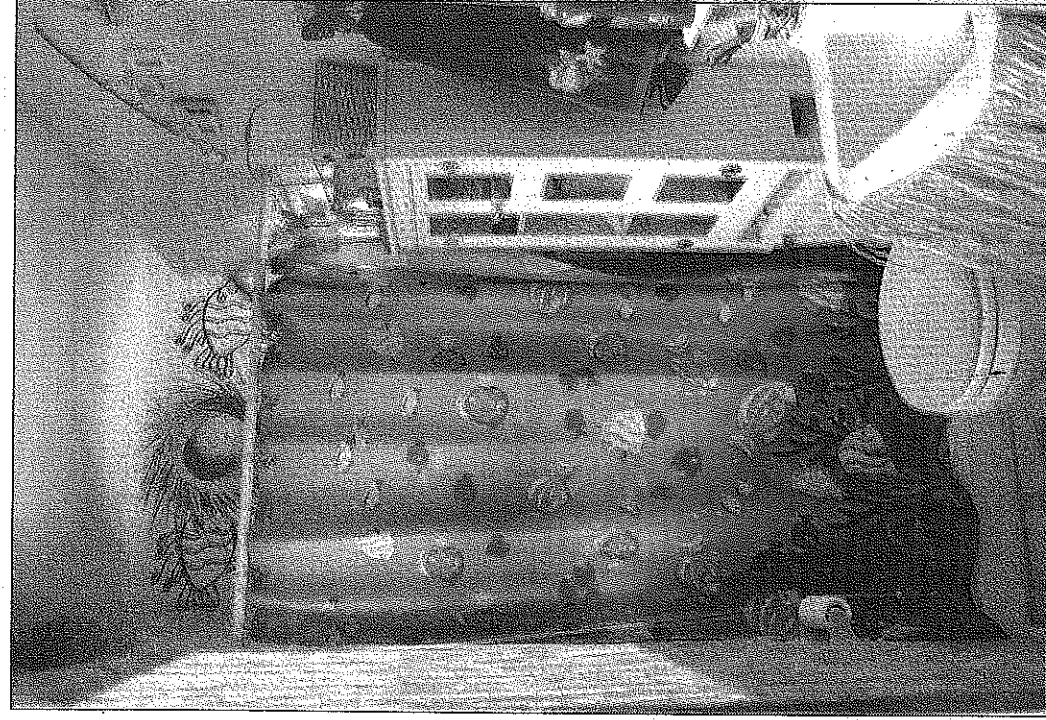
And what does Kayla think?

"It's more than I ever thought it would be," she said. "I thought we'd have a couple little things and that would be it."

Now it's the perfect spot to read, write stories, watch movies or just hang out with friends.

"My friends," she said with a smile, "are just plain jealous."

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The tropical theme carried over to Kayla's bathroom with bamboo curtains on the window and a grass skirt along the base of the sink.

INSIDE

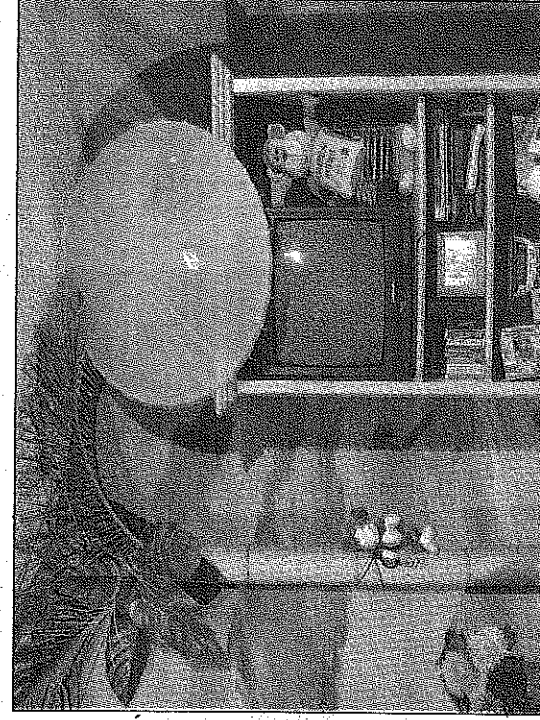
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In Focus:
Kids' Rooms

TROPICAL TOUCHES

Adding to the room's new look

- The furniture, including the desk, was painted to look like bamboo.
- The alarm clock plays ocean sounds.
- A few sticks of lucky bamboo sit in a glass vase on the desk.
- The window treatment was made to look like a thatched roof.
- A wooden 2-by-4 stretches over the top of the double closet, attached to the ceiling with rope. Tropical stuffed animals perch on top.
- Large pieces of bamboo reach from floor to ceiling, with cuttings from



A pink umbrella atop the entertainment center.