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# A Shore Home for Sharing

Designer Ria Gulian creates an ideal retreat  
for the owner to share with family and friends

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The living room originally had wallpaper above chair-rail molding and a painted space beneath it. Designer Ria Gulian opened up the space by removing the wallpaper and painting the entire wall creamy white. Complementary white shutters on the window add to the airy look. The sofa and chaise are covered in a white natural cotton blend and the armchair in beige. All three upholstered pieces feature different textures to add what Gulian calls "tactile awareness." The white coffee table's turned legs strike a vintage note. The blue cabinet sports shutters like the windows.



**Opposite top:** The designer washed the family room's tongue-and-groove paneling in white for a beachy look. Casual comfort is provided by a woven rattan chair and a white canvas sectional, which has a pullout bed for extra sleeping accommodations. The leather ottoman is a welcome landing spot for snacks, playing games or just resting one's feet. The artwork over the sectional — photographs on canvas of shells and starfish — adds to the coastal theme. A large white hutch at right houses the television. **Left:** The office is a narrow space between the family room and living room that was formerly a dining room. A white wood desk and hutch combination features shutter-style doors and bead-board backs behind glass. At left a large built-in houses books, family photos and accessories. **Below left:** The dining area at the end of the open family room has a white pedestal table flanked by chairs with vintage-look slipcovers in a blue, white and cream cotton stripe. A white console with turned legs ups the vintage quotient. **Below:** French doors from the family room open onto the breezeway, used for dining and parties in bad weather. Given the 10-foot high ceiling in this space, the designer placed a counter-height table and chairs here. Sliding doors at right lead to a swimming pool.





## A New York City careerwoman didn't know how to achieve what she envisioned for the look of her new summer home

in Spring Lake Heights. But she had no doubt about what she wanted the home to be: A gift to herself for years of hard work and, just as important, a gift to be shared with family and friends.

The three-bedroom Cape Cod house in this shore community is a tangible embodiment of her client's success, says Ria Gulian, a professional member of the American Society of Interior Designers, state-certified interior designer and owner of Designs by Ria in Oceanport. "It was something she felt she achieved and that she could share with others so they would enjoy her success too. She gets joy out of entertaining her family and friends."

Gulian was called on to turn the 1950s-era house into a retreat for entertaining, for hosting guests — often for long visits — and for escaping the stress of city life. "She wanted a house that is casual, beachy and fun



White Shaker-style cabinetry has vintage brushed nickel hardware that complements the stainless steel appliances in the main kitchen. The perimeter and island countertops are black granite while the backsplash is white subway tile. The pendant lighting fixtures add a nautical accent. Gulian chose blue for the wall under the chair rail and beige yellow above it. The bead-board ceiling is a deeper shade of the beige yellow walls, and the decorative ceiling beams are bright white.



A custom table in the breakfast room has a white base and dark wood top. It's surrounded by brown wicker chairs with white canvas seats. The chairs' dark tones contrast with the white cabinetry and white brick fireplace. Crowning the space is a vintage-look wood chandelier, hand painted with a gold and silver wash.





This space in the former garage had been a dated kitchen "of sorts" for use when guests came in from the pool, but it wasn't a full-blown kitchen, Gulian says. She created a cabana kitchen with new cabinetry featuring bead-board fronts and glass knobs. The backsplash is green and white glass tile, the countertops are green and white granite with black specks and the flooring is honed limestone. This small but highly functional kitchen has a refrigerator, wine refrigerator, small dishwasher and undercounter microwave.



**Above:** The homeowner kept the claw-foot tub original to the master bathroom. It combines with a pedestal sink and sconces for a vintage shore look. The designer had the lower bead-board wall painted soft gray.



**Left:** From the hand-painted white chandelier with crystal drops to the custom painted white iron bed, the look is shabby chic in the master bedroom. Mirrored nightstands flank the bed. A trundle bed in an adjoining space provides additional sleeping accommodations for visiting relatives. Its black headboard and footboard echo the black shade on the lamp on the master bedroom nightstand. There's a table and chairs for morning coffee or tea.



**Top:** A bedroom for the owner's niece is a soft, feminine space with lavender walls and a white cottage-style bed and nightstand. An antique window-frame mirror sits on one wall, and the floors—here and throughout the upstairs—are a light stained wood.

**Center:** The owner loves the lavender and cream chenille fabric used for the upholstered London armchair and ottoman in the niece's room. A mirror with a hand-carved appearance hangs above the dresser.

**Bottom:** The designer chose darker wicker and wood furniture for the bedroom used by the owner's nephew. The furnishings are complemented by dark wood window blinds. The owner chose the bold bedding with green, burgundy and cream stripes for a punch of color. Photos in rustic wood frames above the dresser add to the masculine aura.



and has nothing to do with New York," the designer says of her client. "It was a 360 turn for her."

Gulian says her client loves "cottage, shabby chic and coastal looks." Given the home's location near the shore, the design scheme also would have to be open and airy.

### HIDDEN POTENTIAL

The home's potential was obscured by what Gulian found on her first visit. "It had a lot of 18th century furniture and a lot of wallpaper," the designer says. "And the hardwood floors looked like they hadn't been touched—ever."

Still, the house had some charming features, including beautiful moldings, numerous windows that brought in natural light and vintage plumbing fixtures such as a claw-foot tub in the master bathroom.

The designer had the wallpaper removed throughout the home and chose a color palette of whites, creams, icy lime greens and soft blues. Those colors—along with painted furniture, window shutters, rattan and wicker pieces, and accessories that include shore-themed artwork—combined to create





the cottage, shabby chic and coastal look the homeowner wanted. Gulian also added some darker woods in combination with light fabrics and lots of texture to provide contrast and warmth.

The breakfast room off the kitchen, for instance, has a table with a white base and a dark wood top that contrasts with white cabinetry and a white brick fireplace. The chairs flanking the table are dark brown wicker with white seats.

In the family room, a dark brown leather ottoman and brown woven rattan chair live comfortably with a large comfortable sectional upholstered in white canvas.

And in the master bedroom with its shabby chic white iron bed, an adjoining sleeping space has a bed with a bold black headboard and footboard.

### REPURPOSED SPACES

In addition to the interior design, Gulian repurposed two spaces to achieve greater function and comfort. Former owners had converted a two-car garage into a kitchenette and a storage room at the end of a breezeway off the family room. Gulian transformed the kitchenette into a cabana kitchen to serve the swimming pool area. It doesn't have a range, but it does have a microwave, refrigerator, wine refrigerator and small dishwasher.

Adjacent to the cabana kitchen and one step down, Gulian designed a new mudroom in a former storage area. It has open shelving and a bench for removing shoes and boots in the winter and flip-flops in the summer. It's also home to a new washer/dryer.

### YEAR-ROUND HAVEN

Aesthetics and function combine to make this shore retreat a place Gulian's client, now retired, uses for more than just summer weekends. Although she still favors the rhythms and amenities of city life, she has gone from using her shore home primarily on summer weekends to taking up residence for the entire season along with visiting—and

entertaining—several times year-round, winters included.

The home also is the perfect venue for extended visits by her niece and nephew, both of whom have their own bedrooms designed just for them.

"This house is designed around her lifestyle," Gulian says. "She wanted not only to enjoy the atmosphere and the environment but also her family and friends. They can all reap the benefits from a successful career." **DNI**

*Robin Amster is a Madison-based writer and editor.*

**SOURCES Overall:** interior design, Designs by Ria in Oceanport; builder, Robert Tufts in Sea Girt. **Living Room:** sofa and chaise, J. Redmond Designs in Thomasville, North Carolina; chair, Creative Displays in Tinton Falls; blue cabinet and coffee table, Stanley Furniture in Atlanta, Georgia; rug, Masland Carpet in Boston. **Family Room:** sectional, J. Redmond; chair, Palecek in Richmond, California; hutch, Stanley Furniture; leather ottoman, Pottery Barn; rug, Masland Carpet; artwork, Susan Fairgrieve Design in Atlantic Highlands. **Family Room Dining Area:** table, chairs and console, Stanley Furniture; artwork, Susan Fairgrieve Design. **Office:** desk and hutch, Stanley Furniture; custom wall unit, Designs by Ria; rug, Masland Carpet. **Breezeway:** table, Canadel in Louiseville, Quebec, Canada; chairs, Stanley Furniture. **Kitchen:** cabinetry, Town & Country Kitchen and Bath in Red Bank; pendant lighting, Feiss in New York City. **Breakfast Room:** table, British Traditions in Grandview, Missouri; chairs, Stanley Furniture; chandelier, Cyan in Fort Worth, Texas; rug, Mill House Antiques in Long Branch. **Cabana Kitchen:** cabinetry, Designs by Ria; countertop, backsplash and flooring, A.W. Eurostile in Ocean Township. **Master Bathroom:** sconces, Kichler in Cleveland; chandelier, Primo Glass in Long Branch. **Master Bedroom:** bed, Old Biscayne Designs in Americus, Georgia; end tables, Pier 1; chandelier, Farm House on Broadway in Long Branch; bed in adjoining room, Stanley Furniture. **Niece's Bedroom:** bed and nightstand, Stanley Furniture; mirror, Creative Displays. **Niece's Sitting Area:** dresser, Stanley Furniture; chair and ottoman, Charles Stewart Co. in Hickory, North Carolina; lamps, Creative Displays; mirror, Pier 1; carpet, Pottery Barn. **Nephew's Bedroom:** beds, Stanley Furniture; dresser, Palecek; artwork, homeowner; carpet, Masland.

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