

## GRANDMA WITH ATTITUDE

## Grandma gets a lesson in safety

Last Saturday, my 7-year-old granddaughter and I visited one of the dollar stores, which was filled with shoppers.



ANNE PERSHING

As we strolled the aisles, I smiled and chatted with some of our fellow customers. I noticed my little granddaughter was watching me closely. She looked up at me with a stern look and said, "Grandma, you talk to strangers way too much. Do you think everyone in Reno is your friend?"

I replied, "Yes, I do, sweetheart. They could be one of our readers, and I don't want them to think I'm cranky."

She just looked at me with a twinkle in her eye and said, "Grandma, you're so full of it. At school, they teach us to be careful about talking to strangers. You need to go to my school and learn about that, too."

And she was right. So, I went online and found the Washoe County School District website, which provided helpful information on how to keep our young grandchildren safe.

Grandparents, especially those who are frequent baby sitters, can help make safety a part of everyday life with scenarios and role playing to assist you as you prepare and empower your grandchildren.

» Remind your grandchild that the world is full of strangers and many of them are wonderful and helpful. A stranger is simply someone they do not know.

» However, also help the child understand that some strangers are not good people and could try to hurt them. We can't tell if a stranger is good or bad by how they look.

» Rehearse and role play your grandchild's responses to tricks and dangerous situations.

» The best practice prevention strategy is always supervision. Keep in contact with your grandchild, and if you have questions or concerns, contact the school counselor, administrator or school police.

» Your grandchildren should not get close enough that a stranger is able to grab them. Practice safe distances.

» Go through these scenarios with your grandchild: Strangers who are dangerous often try tricks to get children to go with them. They may tell them that a relative of theirs is hurt or in the hospital. They may tell them that they have lost a child, money or a pet.

They may say that they will give the child money, candy, prizes or make them famous if they go with them. They may threaten or scare children and order them to get into the car. They may pretend to be a person of authority. They also may pretend to know the child and say the child's name or reference one of their friends.

» Tell your grandchild to scream, "No!" get away and run to tell an adult he or she knows and trusts.

» Tell your grandchildren to trust that quiet voice inside them, and that uncomfortable feeling they get in their stomach when something or someone just doesn't feel safe.

We must all work together to keep our children and grandchildren safe. And I want to thank my little granddaughter for reminding her very talkative and loudmouth grandma not to talk too much to strangers.

For more information on keeping your grandchildren safe, visit [www.washoe-countyschools.org](http://www.washoe-countyschools.org).

Contact Anne Pershing at [anne\\_pershing@yahoo.com](mailto:anne_pershing@yahoo.com).



Ashley Jennings sits next to her upcycled table at her Reno home last week. ANDY BARRON/RGJ

## ON THE UP & UP

### LOCAL ENCOURAGES OTHERS TO KEEP OPEN MIND WHEN REFURBISHING

By Laura Longero  
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Ashley Jennings' southwest Reno home is filled with pieces of furniture she has refurbished, though you'd never know it. Pieces like the dining room table, an end table, even the fireplace have been given new life with paint and sandpaper.

"Upcycling," Jennings said, is taking something that currently exists that maybe isn't your style and redoing it to make it something else. For example, her coffee table, which has been painted and refinished, has a completely different look than the polished, furniture-showroom look it had previously.

She started upcycling in high school, but her education began earlier. Her mother was an interior designer and would take her to estate sales, showing Jennings what was worthwhile and what wasn't. Jennings said where her mother's style was classic, hers is more artsy.

"I would try anything," she said. Then, while she was in high school, she found she wasn't attracted to the more traditional art like painting or drawing but did have an artistic eye. A teacher gave her free reign to experiment, so her first project comprised breaking dinner plates into pieces and gluing them onto things as part of her portfolio.

Later, when she got married, she found that she and her husband had a mish-mash of furniture but didn't have the money to start over, so she used materials she already had to repurpose items. She said the most important thing is for a piece to have good structure and good bones.

"I know exactly where every piece of furniture came from," she said. "I look around and say, 'What do I have that I can use?'"

#### The basics

Paint is the easiest and cheapest way to get started upcycling, Jennings said. She regularly checks out what she called the "mess-up" paint section at Home Depot for good colors that are sold at a cheaper price. She keeps a stock of paint and wood stains at all times.

"If I find a good color, I'll pick it up," she said.

Secondly, think about drawer pulls and knobs. She said she's changed many pieces of furniture with new knobs or drawer pulls, as well as cabinets and drawers in her kitchen and bathroom.

Next, she said you can use Mod Podge to create a unique piece. Mod Podge (or decoupage) allows users to adhere paper or fabric to a piece of furniture to give it a distinct look and then use a veneer over it. For example, a dresser could be painted and the top Mod Poded with pages from a book, like a project she did for her husband.

Fourth, be bold. Jennings said the hardest thing about upcycling is that you have to think that you're OK with ruining a piece of furniture. That's why it's good to start with a piece that was either free or cheaply obtained from Craigslist or a similar source.

"Trick yourself into taking the risk," she said.

If the color doesn't turn out the way you thought, paint over it, she said. Paint allows you to reuse an item of furniture several times.

Finally, Jennings said that using sand-

#### HOW THE RGJ UPCYCLE PROJECT WORKS

TV shows such as HGTV's "Flea Market Flip" follow crafters who rework or change "found" items and make them works of art, functional art or items that are just plain functional.

In that spirit of upcycling, we introduce RGJ Upcycle, a summer-long contest that celebrates making something new from something old.

The project begins today and runs through Aug. 16. On Aug. 21, participants' upcycled items will be for sale in a silent auction at the Reno Gazette-Journal. Half the proceeds will benefit the nonprofit RGJ Foundation and donated back to the community; half will return to the participants.

Here's how it works:

1. Go to a garage sale, yard sale, flea market, thrift shop or other second-hand shop. Find an item — cheap! — to refurbish.
2. Take a picture of your item. Email to us at [readersphotos@rgj.com](mailto:readersphotos@rgj.com). Include your name, contact phone number and how much you spent on your item.
3. Get to work on it — clean, polish, paint, decorate, redo. We'll offer helpful tips in this space throughout the summer.
4. Bring your finished item to the RGJ by 5 p.m. Aug. 16.
5. Return for the silent auction and reception at the RGJ. The public is invited.

If your item sells, you will keep half the proceeds; the other half will benefit RGJ Foundation. If it doesn't sell, you get it back.

All participants will have a chance to win a prize (more details to come here).

For more information, contact Jackie Green, community news editor and upcycling fan, at [jgreen@rgj.com](mailto:jgreen@rgj.com) or 775-788-6528.

paper is important. She said that the first step to refinishing a piece is to sand it completely. She also uses sandpaper to distress the edges of a piece or natural places of distress to give it a worn look.

A few things you shouldn't do? Do not use oil-based paints, which makes mistakes harder to undo. Do not buy cheap paintbrushes — invest in quality ones. Do use the right upholstery fabric for furniture; do not using clothing fabric.