

The Heart of
Miniatures

Door Prize Goes to Shelter for Women, Children

by Virginia Chase Sanderson

Mary Ann Caesar won a door prize at the October 2015 meeting of the Midwest Miniature Guild—a 4-foot long, 11-room dollhouse. What to do? It wouldn't fit into her Prius. And she and Sharron Sandberg, her longtime friend and miniature partner, already had two dollhouses both had been working on for over 30 years. So, it was clear from the beginning that they could not keep the dollhouse. And it needed a lot of work!

Finally, it hit them. They could donate it. A call to Alexandra House, an emergency shelter for women and their children in Blaine, Minnesota, confirmed that they would be delighted to receive it for their playroom. And, so, Mary Ann and Sharron, both of Anoka, Minnesota, began the laborious work of restoration. They corrected structural problems, redecorated, and furnished it in 10 weeks of steady work. They made the dollhouse playable for children by choosing simple, solid furnishings and gluing down all items small enough for a child to swallow. Friends and neighbors joined the venture, helping to stabilize the foundation, paint the exterior, and make bedding, decorative pillows, and clothes for the dolls. They also donated their 40 percent-off Hobby Lobby coupons to defray the cost of the project. Once the dollhouse was completed, Mary Ann and Sharron



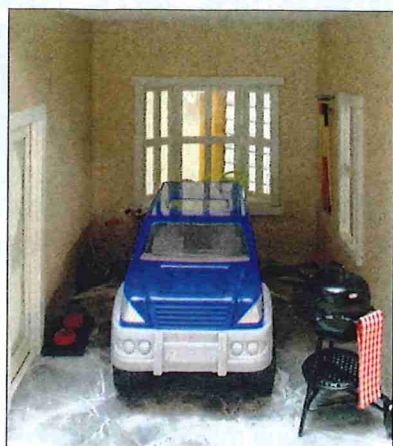
Sharron Sandberg, left, and Mary Ann Caesar stand next to the dollhouse they completed in just 10 weeks. The house was donated to Alexandra House, an emergency shelter for women and their children in Blaine, Minnesota.



The computer room.



The bathroom and laundry.



The garage.

hosted a mini open house for everyone who had assisted them.

The shelter staff was delighted to receive the house, which is not only fun to play with, but serves as a therapeutic tool for children playing alone or with their mothers or staff. As occupational therapists, Mary Ann and Sharron explained, "A child has the opportunity to express feelings nonverbally through play with the dolls in a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere. He/she is also able to portray the behaviors and feelings witnessed in family situations."

Mary Ann and Sharron, deeply satisfied with the adventure, encourage all to share their love of miniatures through a service project of this kind. They will let you in on a little secret, too. If you are willing to do nothing else for 10 weeks, you *can* finish your dollhouse!

Virginia Chase Sanderson lives with her husband in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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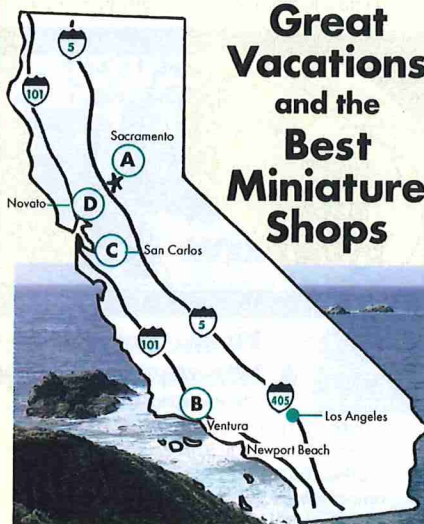
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