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Q&A | Husband and wife turn Dumpster diving into a business

JOB DESCRIPTION: The wife-and-husband team behind Dumpster Diva, www.dumpsterdiva.net. The duo rescues headed-to-the landfill furniture found on the streets. Their pieces are sold at Good Ju Ju, open the First Friday weekend of each month, 1412 W. 12th St., 816-421-1930, www.goodjujukc.com; and wine-related pieces are at Cellar Rat, 1701 Baltimore Ave., 816-221-9463, www.cellarratwine.com.

Allison, you recently appeared on the Nate Berkus Show. What was that like?

Allison: It was so much fun. Producers contacted me out of the blue after they saw my website. On the show, Nate and I talked about a dresser Kevin and I found on the curb. It was made in 1948 out of mahogany. We called the furniture company, Drexel Heritage, to research it. To distress it, we used a little candle wax, then primed and painted it in antique white. We also talked about a chair Kevin found in a Dumpster. I painted it in a plum color and upholstered the seat in zebra. (To see the segment, go to www.thenateshow.com and search "Dumpster.")

Kevin: I was in the audience for moral support. We put a lot of time into this. We love what we do, so it's nice there's some recognition.

What got you started saving furniture?

Allison: I've always loved old vintage pieces. I grew up going to antique stores, garage sales and thrift shops with my mom, aunt and grandma. I work on the account side of an advertising agency, so giving new life to old stuff is my creative outlet. If something can't be sold, we'll take it to the Goodwill or find a home for it. Someone can use it. Kevin is the "dumpster dude" and half of the operation. He's the one with the tools. We have fun.

Kevin, what's your day job?

Kevin: I'm a civil engineer.

Do you actually Dumpster dive?

Allison: Definitely. Kevin, tell them about your adventure saving a porch swing.

Kevin: We saw this front porch swing sitting in a Dumpster, but when we investigated, we found that the swing chain was stuck. I got down in there and something ran across my arm. But I got the swing.

What are some of your favorite creations?

Kevin: A tripod lamp made from a telescope. And an antique gentleman's dresser with a hatbox that needed TLC.

Allison: Chandeliers made out of chafing dishes and utensils.

What do you see thrown away most often?

Allison: Windows. People can turn them into art above the sofa, dry-erase boards, cold frames for gardening and even greenhouses.

What's your next project in your own home?

Allison: The kitchen. It's a galley-style, so we're thinking about knocking down part of the dining room wall to open it up a little. We're going to use reclaimed bowling alley floors as the countertops.

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