

atHOME

The

*A mom and her three daughters transform
a lakefront cottage into a beloved retreat.*

Girls of

by STACY KUNSTEL
photography CARTER BERG

Summer

Sabet Stroman hangs out on the dock with daughters Sloane, 17; Ali, 10; and McKenzie, 14. The calm waters of New Hampshire's Lake Wentworth give the girls from Richmond, Virginia, a chance to perfect their dives.



FOR A PRECIOUS COLLECTION OF weeks each summer, Sabet Stroman and her three daughters focus their attention on making memories. They play board games at a picnic table, swap books, swim, canoe, and sit side by side on the deck of their Lake Wentworth cottage, sharing bowls of wild blueberries. Card playing replaces TV watching, and the girls spend more time at the library than they do online. All agree that a New Hampshire summer beats any they could spend at their home in Richmond, Virginia.

"In New Hampshire, we don't have to worry about schedules or carpools," says 17-year-old Sloane. "Everything is on our own time. There's nothing that we have to do; it's only things that we want to do."

For Sloane that means sneaking off for ice cream with her two younger sisters, McKenzie, 14, and Ali, 10; going

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(above) Furniture left from previous owners is coupled with flea market and auction finds in the cottage. Sabet pulls flowers from the yard to create colorful bouquets. (left) Sloane and Sabet dig into an afternoon snack in their newly painted kitchen.





To update the cottage, Sabet slipcovered the sofa in the family room, made new cushions for an old wicker chair, and painted an existing side table. Removing a dropped ceiling revealed beams, which Sabet painted white to accentuate the room's height.

into nearby Wolfeboro to buy nail polish; or just hanging out. But it's also meant helping their mother transform this 1920s cottage into a cozy retreat.

"My husband, who passed away eight years ago, loved the lake, and we spent lots of great summer vacations up here with our girls," says Sabet. "This was a really special place for our family. I wanted so much to have a place that, over the years as the girls grew up and

moved away, would bring us back together and help us feel close to him. Our lives in Richmond are so busy. When we're here, it feels like all of the pressure to perform and succeed takes a backseat to the joy of spending time together."

Using most of her resources, Sabet, a consultant and teacher, pulled together enough money to purchase a nonwinterized summer cottage. "When I saw



An old blanket chest serves as a coffee table in front of the massive brick fireplace that had been encased in Sheetrock. Wolfeboro Falls interior designer Julie Fergus made the mantelpiece.

the house, it was emotionally a done deal," she says. "It was a huge financial leap for me." To help pay for it, Sabet rents the cottage for all but the five or six weeks she and the girls are here.

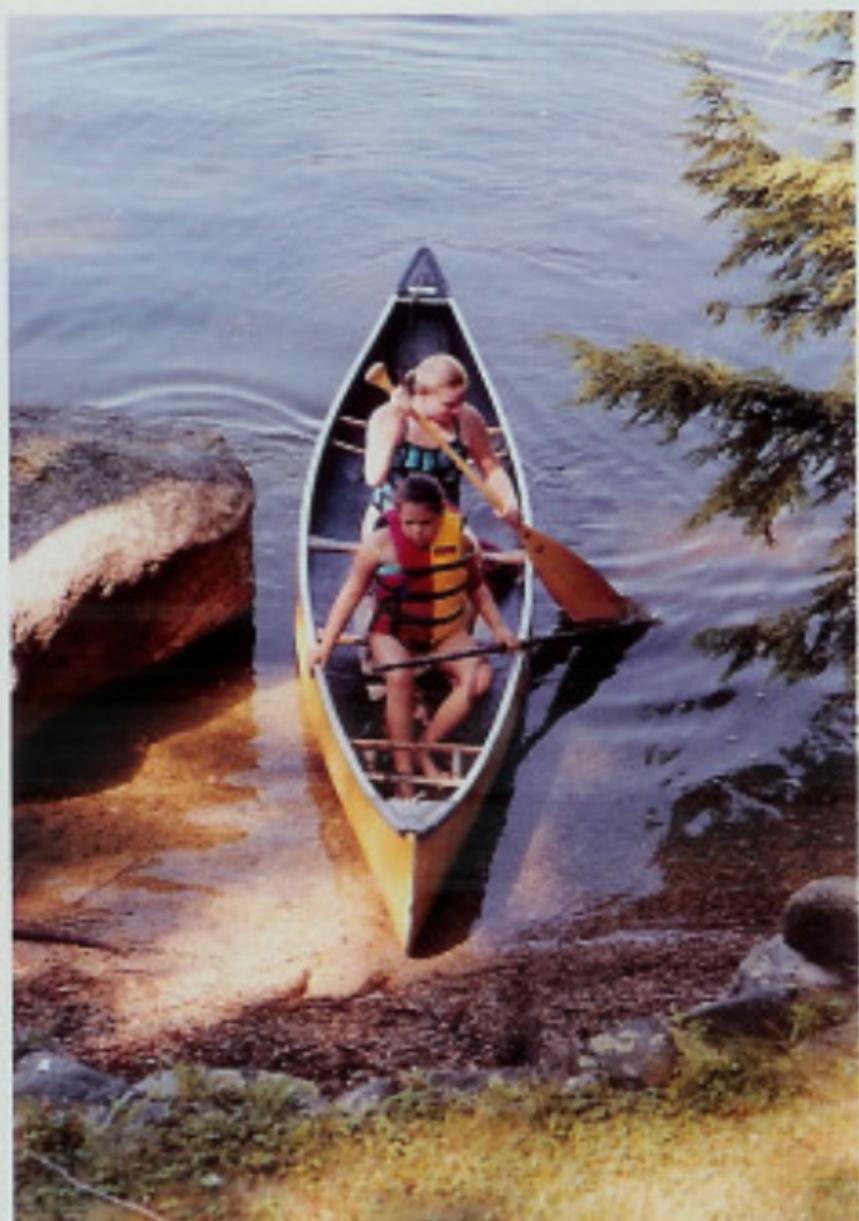
With lots of paint and cleaning rags, auction buys and creativity, Sabet and her daughters have turned the cottage into a stylish retreat. They ripped out shag carpeting and, with some help, removed the false ceiling, revealing wood beams. They knocked down the Sheetrock that encased the shapely fireplace and added moldings for charm.

Making the most of the furniture that came with the house, they had the sofa and a few chairs slipcovered. Walls, ceilings, floors, and the rest of the furniture got coats of paint. They used what they had and what they could find—old shutters became a headboard in the master bedroom, and boat oars function as a curtain rod in the living room.

Easy fixes included painting the kitchen cabinets, while a more challenging task was tearing out a sink unit in the master bath. Sabet even started a cottage industry by collecting damaged vintage chenille bedspreads, sewing them into pillows, and selling them



Part of a family of avid readers, Sloane and Ali use the afternoon hours to delve into one of dozens of books they'll devour over the summer.



Ali and McKenzie take the family canoe out for an adventure.

locally at American Home Gallery in Wolfeboro Falls.

Now that much of the work on the house is completed, there's more time for fun. "I like walking into town with Mom and going to the Yum Yum Shop with her," says Ali, who has also taken up acting with sister McKenzie in one of Wolfeboro's summer theater programs. "We have special family dinners, and I like going on the boat with everyone and just talking."

While some teenagers do everything to avoid their parents during the summer, McKenzie loves to accompany her mom to local auctions.

"New Hampshire has done so much for my family," says Sloane. "After my dad died, it served as a place where we could go to remember him together. Now it's a place where we can go and concentrate on being together." ★

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