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Finding Neverland

Bed time will be a fun time for Riley and Emelia Lane when they become roommates

When Tinkerbell and Peter Pan share a bedroom, there was really only one theme that would delight both children. Welcome to Neverland, New Plymouth.

By **Vanessa Johnson** Photography **Philippa Guthrie**

With two kids under two, a part-time job and a new home to renovate, Latashia Lane of New Plymouth had a lot on her mind as Christmas 2010 approached. And, even though it's a stressful time for everyone, Tarsh and her husband Chris were in for a particularly nasty shock before the holidays got started.

A week before Christmas, Chris was made redundant from his building job. The buzz they felt from winning Resene's Dream Room competition was eclipsed but, recalls Tarsh, with a young family and a mortgage, there wasn't time for the Lanes to feel sorry for themselves.

"Chris phoned every contact he had in the business to try and find work. We got the good news on Christmas Eve that he could start at his new job on 26 January." From then on, life was back on track for the young family, with one added bonus - Tarsh knew Chris would be free during January to help her decorate the children's bedroom.

In fact his building skills were essential to the success of her design. "Chris had suggested we make the tree-house bunk beds into a real feature, so that's what I did in the design and I needed him to make them," says Tarsh.

Baby Emelia, now 11 months, was too young to know what was happening when the work began on the bedroom she will share with big brother Riley,

now aged two. But as soon as the DIY work kicked off, Riley wanted to help. "We had to paint when Riley slept," says Tarsh. "So in the morning when he saw what we'd done, he'd say 'naughty Daddy's been painting on the walls'."

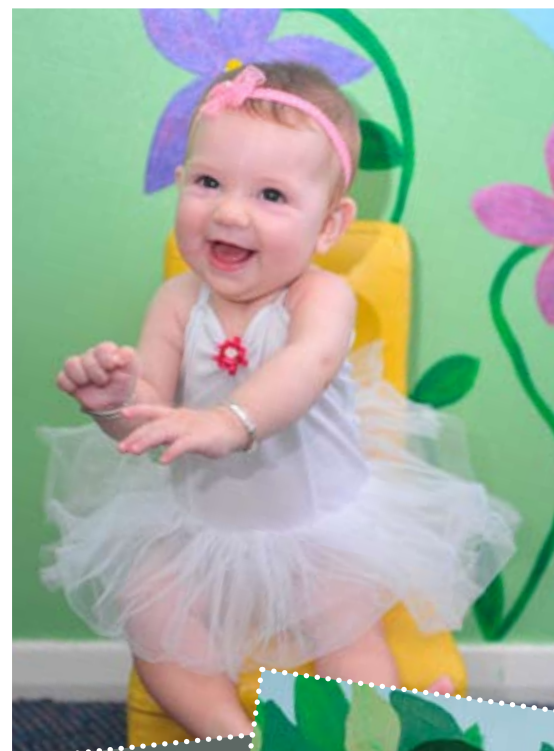
Chris wasn't the only one painting the walls. Tarsh's parents Emelie (Oma) and Shane (Poppa) helped from the start with sanding and painting as well as some of the more detailed work.

"I wanted a pirate and a fairy on the wall and couldn't find the right transfers," says Tarsh, "So Dad took a piece of chalk and drew them freehand for me." Tarsh then painted the characters using testpots of Resene metallic paints (see tips, over).

When it came to making the curtains Tarsh's uncle Marcel, who was visiting from Sydney, came to the party. "He sewed the curtains on a big table outside on my parents' deck. We ended up with exactly what we wanted and saved about \$300 by making them ourselves," says Tarsh.

Creating the tree-house bunks was the biggest challenge. Tarsh and Chris measured up their design and drew it onto sheets of MDF. Then they cut out the pieces using a skill saw and a jig saw and used 150mm x 25mm timber slats to make the base of each bunk bed.

"We did the measuring and cutting outside and brought the pieces inside



Latashia and Chris Lane with Riley, two, and Emelia, 11 months

Tips and tricks



A cosy spot under the tree is Emelia's favourite place for storytime

The more that you read, The more that you'll know,
The more that you learn, The more places you'll go.
Dr Seuss

to build the bunks in the bedroom," says Tarsh. "Everyone helped paint. At one stage Mum was painting the clouds, Marcel was painting the leaves and Chris was putting the children to bed. Everyone had a job to do."

Looking back Tarsh says some ideas that worked on paper didn't work out in practice. "It seemed like the room design evolved every day. We had planned to include some drawers but in the end they took up too much space and I really wanted the kids to have room to play."

The finishing touch was the Dr Seuss quote over the door. "Each letter is individually cut out and comes like a stick-on tattoo sandwiched between two layers of plastic. We used masking tape to position the letters before removing the clear plastic backing and sticking them on to the wall," says Tarsh.

The sunny yellow chair under the tree is from A Single Wish, Oma's children's

party shop in New Plymouth. Tarsh made the leaf-shaped floor cushions from green felt and used glitter fabric paint to decorate them. She also used felt and Velcro to make leaves for the tree wall mural in the corner.

So, what do the Lane children think of their new room? "Emelia crawls in there to play with the books and Riley calls it his playroom and can't wait to show it to anyone who visits," says Tarsh. "At the moment he's enjoying the blackboard under the window."

For now Riley sleeps in the bottom bunk while Emelia still sleeps in a cot. But those arrangements will soon change because Tarsh and Chris are expecting baby number three just in time for Christmas 2011.



Poppa Shane drew the fairy and pirate

A huge toybox filled with treasure (aka toys) is every pirate's dream



Resene Blackboard Paint makes for hours of fun



Resene colours used:

Walls: **Resene Splat** (blue); **Resene Tutti Frutti** (green). Flowers on vines: **Resene Fairground** (purple); **Resene Sugar And Spice** (darker pink); **Resene Bedazzle** (lighter pink). Vine leaves and bunk trees: **Resene Grass Stain**; **Resene Kermit**; **Resene Brown Bramble** (trunks).

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