My girlfriend recently moved into a new home and found out that her nearly new guest bed no longer fit into her spare bedroom which also doubles as her home office. That's where I come in. For a while I had been thinking of replacing my youngest daughter's twin bed with a full-sized one, but was in no real hurry. When my friend offered it at a price I couldn't refuse, I jumped on it. My nine-year-old daughter was thrilled to have a new white four-poster bed (it sits so high off the ground that she has to take a running start and leap onto it!) and needless to say I was delighted by the price.

After I dressed the bed with pretty purple and yellow bedding that I already had (it was queen-sized, but once on the bed, no one can tell), I realized that she needed a small side table to go beside it. I started looking throughout my house for possible options. Out in the garage I found the perfect little table (one of my $2 garage-sale-deals), and the only thing it needed was a couple coats of white paint to match the bed. Inspired by the transformation of my daughter's room, I decided to tour the rest of our home and give a few more rooms a summertime-facelift.

The Best Place to Start is at the Beginning…

As strange as it may sound, the first room in your home is outside…on your front porch. I began there and purchased two cans of high gloss black paint (around $6 for both) and repainted the dull, slightly rusty wrought-iron bench. It looked as good as new! Next I found an $8 seat cushion for the bench at Salvation Army, 900 N. 4th Street in Minneapolis (Their lower-level is all new Target overstocks, scratch-and-dents, and samples). The finishing touch to room #1 was adding three fairly large pots of red, white, and purple flowers that I caught on sale at Sam's Club for only $13.50! They were reduced from their regular price of around $20 because they were wilting and appeared to have seen better days. Like most living things, my flowers only needed a little bit of TLC (and H2O) and they were back in business the next day!

Let's Get Cookin!

The kitchen/great room was room #2 and it didn't take long to redo. I started by changing out my red curtains on the patio door and replaced them with light-weight cream and brown ones that I purchased on clearance from Target (around $25 for all four panels). Instantly the room changed. It went from the formal-Christmas-dinner feel to a casual-summer-barbeque vibe. On

the great room sofa, the pillows were changed to a vibrant green which made the tan sofa pop! I even found a replacement fabric-actually a curtain panel-to recover my aging ottoman (using a heavy duty staple gun) which sits in front of the sofa. Again, it was a Salvation Army score at only $4-and way cheaper than buying fabric by the yard at the fabric store!

Thinking of a Master Plan…

The final room in need of attention was our master bedroom. And although I love my Asian-influenced brick red and brown bedding, I knew it was time for a change. Down in the basement I found a summery cream and tan spread and it made the space seem light, bright and airy. Finally, I pulled a simple floral arrangement from another room and my look was complete. The room is now fit for a king (and queen)!

Here's the bottom line: at some point we all need a change of scenery-inside and outside of our homes. It can be easier and less costly than you may think to update the look of your home. The key is to think outside of the box. Consider how you can give an item you already have a new purpose. Decide which piece of furniture could be fabulous in a new color, and paint it. Also, always start your shopping trip at home first and then head out to your favorite spots. In other words, go through the rooms and closets in your home (don't forget the basement and garage) and see how you can use what you already have-in a different way than before.

One final thought: When I realized that my daughter's bedroom makeover left me with an extra pair of twin mattresses and a set of bunk beds, I found two families who had use for what I no longer needed. I gladly gave them the furniture. There is a built-in blessing in giving freely and regularly sharing with others. It provides the best type of makeover of all-Gratitude and Generosity. Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at a low cost. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.