

# New police station mural aims to calm children in 'soft room'

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Adrienne Mack (center) with artists Raul Gonzalez and Gigi Bretado in the finished room. (Credit: Adrienne Mack)



By Hayley Fox  
Comment

Among the sparse walls, steel desks and uniformed officers of the Newton Police Department, a small room is an oasis of tranquility and hominess. Located on the second floor, this "soft room" is where children are held when they wait for child protective services, or where rape victims may wait to speak with detectives. It's an attempt to cushion their vulnerability, if only in a very small way.

The room's makeover was spearheaded by Adrienne Mack, a woman whose company, [Parenting First](#), offers safety and preparedness classes for expectant parents. Mack said she is an "infant advocate," working for babies because they can't speak for themselves.

She discovered these "soft rooms" at L.A. police stations when she was teaching car seat safety classes for different communities. Often, these bare-bones rooms were weathered and sterile, she said.

"I felt that I needed to do something a little more child-infant friendly," Mack said. "I'm advocating for them so [I] advocate, in every arena."

Once Mack realized these rooms were used for children, she wanted to try and make them more comfortable and calming.

Officer Reggie Gay works at Newton in the community relations department. He said he thinks that the children will respond to the vivid colors of the mural and that it will help soothe them when they are potentially vulnerable.

Shades of blue, orange and brown make up the mural that covers an entire wall. It looks like a desert sunset with a few sparse trees, animals and a scattering of flying birds. It's a breath of fresh air in the otherwise compact, single-windowed room.

<http://www.oncentral.org/news/2012/01/10/police-station-mural-aims-comfort-children-victims/>

Mack is not an artist, so she recruited help to make her vision come true on a small budget. Mack had previously orchestrated a similar project at the soft room of the 77th Division police station. There, a team of Los Angeles Trade Technical College students worked under Graphic Arts Director Ralph Guthrie to paint a tall mural of a tropical sunset.

That same group of students referred her to Raul Gonzalez and Gigi Bretado, the two artists who stepped up to make over the Newton room.

Before Gonzalez and Bretado signed on, Mack said she made 20 to 30 phone calls over the course of a few weeks, trying to get artists to volunteer.

"I find the artist and beg and plead and tell them my cause," Mack said.

Now the room is repainted but it's empty, and there's not enough money to furnish it with new chairs and toys. Many other LAPD's soft rooms are in need of a makeover as well.

"That's not a project that the city can take on," she said. "There's just no room for that and no budget for that."

Gay said the Newton room will eventually be filled with furniture, toys and, hopefully, a television. With a shortfall of city funds, the police station will probably solicit donations or host fundraisers to help with the funding.

"We're going to do it if we have to do it piece by piece," Gay said.

Mack said she asked for Capt. Jorge Rodriguez's word that the room would be filled with the best furnishings possible: an ottoman, a rocking chair and new seats for the detectives.

For more information or to make a donation, go to the [Preparing Parents Foundation](http://www.preparingparents.org).