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## Playhouse Builder to the Stars makes a stop in Southampton

By Christine Keener



Photo by Barbara Butler

Tree houses and playhouses are no longer just for children.

Barbara Butler, an artist and builder, creates intricate and detail-oriented structures for the whole family.

Butler, based in San Francisco, took her construction background, love of outdoors and children and turned it into a lucrative business. "I once was asked to build a play structure for a client, and I then came up with custom designs," says Butler.

Butler was recently in Southampton building a tree house for a client (seen here), which took three on-site days to complete. The clubhouse was built with the tree in the center of the structure.

"We spent two days getting the deck attached to the tree safely and sturdy," says Butler.

The clubhouse includes an open deck, a fire pole, a climbing pole and a rock climbing pole. There also is a ladder into the clubhouse. The clubhouse has quite a few twists and turns.

The structure cost around \$35,000 to build.

Designs typically take three to five days to complete in the San Francisco workshop and are then shipped to the desired location. The structures may not mimic the home, but some do "play off the house by picking up elements of the house color or detail," says Butler.

Some designs include pirate ships and castles.

Butler uses all redwood, natural materials from forests. She also uses tung oil stain, which is non toxic and protects the wood. The stain slowly fades, but doesn't chip.

Her celebrity clientele includes Will Smith and Jada Pinkett-Smith, Robert Redford, Kevin Kline and Phoebe Cates.

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