

SPOTLIGHT: MICHELLE IFVERSEN FOUNDER OF DESIGNWELL STUDIOS

By, *Catie Hofmeister*



Don't you just love the way you feel after spending time in nature? Reduced stress, increased feeling of connectedness, and overall improved sense of wellbeing are all benefits of a nature immersion experience. It's no coincidence that we see the "indoor jungle" trend growing rapidly, as people spend more time at home working remotely now. Simply incorporating plants into our house decor is one easy way to start creating a healthier and happier home environment... **but what does it really mean to "optimize our built environment for wellbeing?"**

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OPTIMIZING BUILT ENVIRONMENTS FOR WELL BEING

"Optimizing for well being is having more awareness about your environment and maintaining it so it is supportive, inspiring and healthy,"

Not only do we desire a space that looks great, but we want one that helps us feel great too. Luckily, we can look to leading environmental wellness experts like Michelle Ifversen for better understanding the impact that our surrounding environment has on our mental and physical health.

Michelle Ifversen from DesignWell Studios is an environmental wellness designer and consultant who specializes in biophilic interior design and sustainable landscape design. Holistic designers like Michelle who truly look at all factors that go into a healthy home environment, including sustainability, psychology, safety, and physical wellness are defining the future of wellness living. Michelle says "It's about having more awareness about your environment and maintaining it so it is supportive, inspiring and healthy," Michelle's husband Thomas previously owned a mold testing and mitigation company and specializes in indoor air quality. Together they are helping many people in Portland and across the country feel better in their own homes.

So many people aren't aware of what to look out for that could potentially interfere with their health when they are purchasing a home, while they live there and how to maintain it properly to avoid issues. Many illnesses are preventable, and environments can be more supportive and healthier with education and the proper resources, materials and support. *Stay tuned for a subscription-based membership launching soon that will help people fine tune their environment into a healthy, functional place that is healthy.*

As a contributing writer for WellnessRE Magazine™, Michelle so kindly shares design concepts and strategies with us each and every month about biophilic design and environmental wellness. Learn more about Michelle Ifversen's DesignWell business and inspiration from our interview on the next page!



"There is so much more that goes into a healthy home than just clean counters, vacuumed carpets and clean air filters."



Michelle & her husband and business partner Thomas Ifversen

We love how your work is centered around improving the wellbeing of others. How are health and wellness factors incorporated into your design process?

“One of the main things we do at DesignWell is help find out if their environment could be affecting their health. We test air and surfaces for mold, mycotoxins, chemicals, emf/rf's and see if there could be a possible link to your environment. People spend up to 90% of our time indoors and my goal is that all the spaces above have healthy indoor air quality, safe levels of EMF's and RF's and have healthy sources to the products, materials, finishes and furnishings.

People suffering from health issues that they can't seem to shake and have been to the doctors many times but can't seem to get better, I help to identify the root cause if it is coming from the environment. I have a thorough questionnaire I go through with you to investigate possible culprits along with environmental testing. I have helped many people over the years with asthma, Lyme, multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, fatigue, joint pain, and more. It is a twofold approach for both bodies and buildings. People must address both in order to get better.

What is your goal about getting the word out about environmental wellness?

My goal is to educate builders, developers, architects and designers to source healthier materials, so people don't get sick in the first place. Building codes have to change to support the humans and pets that live in the buildings.

So many buildings are built next to industry, highways, powerlines and have cheap building materials, especially flooring that could produce poor indoor air quality and high frequencies that people's bodies can't sustain on a long-term basis.

I want to educate about healthy building practices and materials to increase the levels of health and wellbeing in built environments. People want healthy homes now more than ever and with DesignWell's support they can learn how to source for healthy materials, furnishings and shore up their indoor air quality.

What's the one thing you recommend people pay attention to?

Everyone needs healthy indoor air quality, especially babies and the elderly as their immune systems are more fragile. We recommend testing the air quality and creating better filtration and ventilation is key. Poor indoor air quality results in many illnesses that can absolutely be preventable. New regulations are happening in each state, check your building codes for updates. Oregon has just instilled a new law that each new single family and multifamily property needs to have fresh air intake systems. My goal is to have existing homes have them as well.

How does biophilic design help your well-being?

Biophilic design in buildings helps ground and reduce stress for the occupants. When you have elements that mimic nature like natural lighting, plant life, views of nature, healthy indoor air quality and comfortable acoustic levels, etc it evokes a sense of calm, relaxation with a deeper connection to nature that is absolutely innate to human beings. It's tough to thrive in a high-rise apartment or office with fluorescent lighting, furniture and carpet that is off gassing, poor indoor air quality and zero plants. No wonder people are stressed and miss work.

What is your favorite element of biophilic design?

Biomimicry, patterns and behaviors that mimic nature, it is fascinating. I have been a photographer for many years, and I love photographing patterns in nature. I have a macro lens and I focus on patterns from mushrooms, leaves, bark, flowers all from a different angle. I went to art school, and I love infusing design and science together. I will be launching a collection soon that encompasses those patterns and infuses them into household objects, textiles and art.



"There is beauty in nature and it's around us all. It enlivens us at a deep level and if we can bring those elements into our built environment, we can live happier, healthier and more joyful lives." - Michelle Ifversen



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