



ABOVE AND BELOW: A living room gets a facelift from organizer Sue Romanic, owner of Organized by Romanic. Professional organizers can help those who are too busy or overwhelmed to put some order in their life.

Get it together!

Organizers pick up, perk up the house

By ELLEN M. SCARANO
Staff Writer

There is no getting around it. We live in a world full of more material goods than ever before and it all needs a place to go. But going to work every day, taking care of children and carving out family or leisure time are more important and time flies. Before you know it, stuff is everywhere and not everything is in its place.

Coming to the rescue is a professional organizer, Tara McCourt, owner of Organize It, located in Arnold, who says "The biggest problem I find with people is not that they lack storage (space) but they have a bunch of stuff they don't use."

The general rule to follow, she adds, is that if something comes in to the house something else must go out.

"If you have a platter that you use every three years when it's your turn to have Thanksgiving dinner, is that a valuable use of your storage space?" she adds.

As a professional organizer, Mrs. McCourt makes house and office calls to evaluate the goods, the current storage method and not only makes suggestions but does the organizing for you.

"What I try to do is take the space within the home and maximize the space within, such as dividing cabinet space in half to maximize the use of shelf space. I try to get people to look at what they have in their home and if it's useful to them," she says.

have put off for many months can be done.

"In a bedroom, for instance, with one good sized walk-in closet, it takes between four and five hours to get it all in shape," says Mrs. McCourt.

Mrs. McCourt says she starts the job by taking everything out of the closet, separating all the clothes into piles — one for "still useable," one for "haven't worn in 6 months" and one for "stuff you don't remember the last time you wore it."



Dividing shelf space can help maximize storage capacity, as shown in the above garage organized by Tara McCourt, owner of Organize It.



What's so intimidating about cleaning out a closet?

"Most people are afraid of the immensity of the project; they just don't know where to begin. I hear all the time. There's a lot of motivation in paying somebody — if you hire me to come into your house, you know you're going to get it done because you're paying me to get it done," says Mrs. McCourt.

Another reason for hiring an organizer is the old "two heads are

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better than one" theory. "It's another pair of eyes. You look at your closet and see there's no space for anything and I look in it and see some clothes that haven't been in style since 1978 or the old maternity clothes you want to keep in case you get pregnant again and the youngest child is 15 now," observes Mrs. McCourt.

"I never leave a home with an unhappy customer. I learned while teaching kindergarten that that is when folks should be learning their primary organizing skills or they won't have the skills later on. Anyone can learn the skills at any time," Ms. Romanic said.

All kinds of people with different reasons use the services of a professional organizer.

Sue Romanic, owner of Organized by Romanic in Columbia, says "There's a huge market. I get a real range of people — busy families, dual career couples with children, busy moms, elderly folks that are downsizing."

A professional organizer can also help people with a condition known as OCD — obsessive compulsive disorder — which can cause a person to have trouble putting things in order to reduce clutter, which is sometimes exacerbated when under stress. People with OCD may need help maintaining the order after it's done, notes Ms. Romanic. Others tend to have miscellaneous things put away in multiple locations. A professional organizer helps them see the advantage of getting similar items together and storing them more efficiently, says Ms. Romanic.

Another thing Mrs. McCourt has noticed during her organizing career is that people buy a lot of things, like Rubbermaid bins, and don't use them. They end up empty in the basement or garage.

She suggests that the best thing to do when setting things in order is to maximize space and keep things of value. "You don't need thousands of dollars of equipment to make your home user friendly," she says.

To get the job done, Mrs. McCourt works in three-hour sessions usually because the owner's attention span starts to wane after that long with so many decisions to make about what to keep and what to throw away.

"Creative people see possibilities that others don't see. They are the least likely to get rid of stuff, but once they explain why they keep it, I help them organize it so they can keep it," observes Ms. Romanic.

Keep the special prom dress but don't keep every single dress that you wore to a party. At some point most folks realize they need the space more than the things, she adds.

If old clothes, toys and unused computers are still useful and the owner doesn't want to throw them out, consider donating to charity. Inner city schools can use books, the Lighthouse homeless shelter, battered women's shelter and women in unplanned pregnancies can use clothes, suggests Mrs. McCourt.

For procrastinators, Ms. Romanic tells clients "to put (the questionable item) in the trunk of the car for a week or month and if you find you don't need it, keep going right on to the donation place."

Ms. Romanic advises that significant tax deductions may help motivate one to clean out. The IRS publishes a directory of items and what they are worth for deduction purposes.

Mrs. McCourt started working with corporate clients, organizing filing and other storage problems, and opened her own business in March, expanding to include residences.

Ms. Romanic has clients in three counties, including Anne Arundel, and will even travel out of state.

Just as there are many reasons to hire an organizer, there are reasons a person becomes an organizer. Ms. Romanic knew she had an early interest when she reflected on her need to have things in the same place.

She discovered she's happy when she's organizing, when time flies and there is satisfaction found in a job well done.

That was in 1999 and business has grown every year since then.

Organize It is in Arnold. Saturday hours are available to accommodate working people. For more information or to schedule a consultation, call Tara at 443-838-5078. Organized by Romanic is in Columbia. Call Ms. Romanic at 410-995-0435.

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