

Simplify Your Life

Get Organized!

by Amy M. Wall

Our theme this month is Simple Living. Many of us would very much like to simplify our lives. But it's tough to simplify if we're spending hours searching for bills we forgot to pay and important paperwork we misplaced. If only we could clear out the garage so we could get the car into it, take even one step into our kids' rooms and clear the junk out of the guest room before Mom shows up. Think it's hopeless? Tucson Professional Organizers to the rescue!

Tucson Professional Organizers (T-PrO) is a group of Professional Organizers who work together to spread the word about the benefits of organized living. Each member of TPrO owns an organizing business and has one or more specialties from paper clutter and office files to senior move management and hoarding. T-PrO members come together to contribute to our community by volunteering their time each year to help a Tucson non-profit agency improve their use of space and materials. When ABC's "Extreme Home Makeover" came to Tucson this past February to tear down and rebuild Red Cross Hero Lizzie Bell's home in just one week, T-PrO participated by organizing closets, kitchen, bedrooms and pantry.

Professional organizers are "personal trainers," helping those who want to simplify their lives get rid of the clutter. They help us take control of our environment, time, paper and life. Even if you're the family slob and couldn't organize your way out of a paper bag, chances are you can make significant progress in getting organized; the keys are

to find an organizer you trust and enjoy working with, and to make a commitment to change your ways.

It's possible that clutter does more than make us disorganized – it may also contribute to gaining weight! Peter Walsh, host of the television show Clean Sweep says there's a correlation between clutter and weight. His new book, "Does This Clutter Make My Butt Look Fat?" explores this correlation and offers advice and tactics for getting both clutter and weight under control.

How does someone get into this line of work? Most feel they were born organizing. MaryLynn St.Germaine, TPrO's President-Elect says, "I had a budding business called The Clean Way when I was 8 years old. I had pink shimmery business cards and would tidy up for 75 cents a job.

Many collections can be put to good use. MaryLynn says, "My grandmother was an avid doll collector. She had hundreds and hundreds of dolls collected over her 83 years, all labeled, taken care of and displayed in china cabinets throughout her home. When she passed away, I inherited the dolls. My mother, sister and I each took a few that had special meaning to us and boxed up the rest. They sat in a storage facility until I realized these beautiful dolls were likely to stay in storage until I passed them along to my own daughter, who would probably keep them in that same storage facility until she could pass them to her daughter. Well, it just seemed crazy. My mother and I decided that we would pass them along to



Here's a life waiting to be simplified!



Organized, simplified – and beautiful!

doll clubs and a doll museum. Knowing that these dolls were finally out of their dark boxes, being loved and appreciated, made us feel that parting with them was the right thing to do."

To help the do-it-yourselfers, here are ten tips to get you started.

1. Resist the temptation to buy fun organizing gadgets before knowing what you really need.
2. Create piles: "Give Away," "Put Away," "Throw Away/Recycle." "Do I need this item?" "Do I love this item?"
3. Marathon organizing sessions rarely succeed. Start small and focus on one area at a time.
4. When you start a new project, create a file folder for it.
5. Use staples instead of paper clips.
6. When you need to stay focused, turn off the phone and email. Both are distracting and reduce available mental energy.
7. When deciding what to keep, ask: Does it work? Have I used it in the last year? Do I love it?
8. Stop unread magazine subscriptions. You can always re-subscribe later, when you have more time.
9. Turn your hangers to face backward in your closet; once you have worn an item, put it back the correct way. In 6 months, look at the hangers still facing the wrong way in your closet. These are the garments you should consider donating.
10. Label storage boxes so you know what's in them.

Ready to get started? Contact tucsonprofessionalorganizers.org