

Organizer Offers Tips to the Untidy

by Deanna Lee Chaparro, *Record-Journal* staff

SOUTHINGTON - Along with the sounds of birds and children playing as snow gives way to flowers come the sounds of vacuum cleaners buzzing as dust bunnies give way to clean floors.

With spring cleaning comes organizing. But for those who have let the task wait for too long, taking it on may prove too overwhelming.

Take heart. It's completely normal to have piles of stuff everywhere, professional organizer Faith Manierre told the audience at the Southington Public Library at Organize Yourself for Spring last week.

Americans, she said, suffer from "affluenza."

"Society teaches us to buy," Manierre said. "They don't teach us when to let go."

As president of Busy Bees Professional Organizing LLC, Manierre makes her living helping people clear out their clutter. The Glastonbury resident is also president of the Connecticut chapter of the National Association of Professional Organizers.

"If it's hard to tackle, minimize it. Look at one spot," she said.

One woman asked how to determine when it was time to throw away receipts. The woman still had receipts from the 1940s.

"It sounds kind of silly when I think about it now," the woman said.

There is no right way to do things, Manierre said. When making decisions about tossing old items, just ask, "Why do I really need it?"

Most people aren't taught how to deal with clutter, Manierre said.

"We were told we were going to have a paperless society. What happened?" Manierre said. "We're just bombarded with paper."

She lifted a cardboard box from a table and out spilled a pile of junk mail that she had saved over a one-month period. The best way to deal with junk mail, she said, is to make sure it doesn't enter your house. Toss it once you go through it, she said.

Another way to get organized is to start a "tickler" file. Buy a milk crate and two sets of differently colored folders. Take 12 of one color and label them with the months. Use 31 of a different color for the days of the month. The folders can hold anything from plane tickets to bills to wedding invitations.

Using a personal digital assistant instead of a large day planner is more compact and can be less stressful. The information on the PDA can be transferred to the computer and vice versa. That way, if the PDA is lost, the information isn't, she said.

The program was perfect for the start of spring because people want to clean and purge at this time of year, said Christine Peterson, a Southington resident.

"We have so much more stuff. That is the struggle," Peterson said. "Categorizing helps. So does focusing on actually doing it."

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