



Connected... to meet your needs

**"Organizing is what you do before you do something,
so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up."**

-A.A. Milne

Dear Friend,

Keeping our things in order can be a major task, but if we fail to tackle it now, we may find ourselves dealing with way too much *stuff* later! If the thought of spring cleaning (or moving) makes you shudder, there is lots of good organizational advice available to you. And experts to help as well – happy to refer you to them too...

Stu and I truly realized just how much we had accumulated in our ten years in the last house. Perhaps in some ways it's easier to organize and de-clutter when you need to sell your house – it really is a must do. And I need to admit, we really haven't missed what we did let go of! The attached flyer makes a terrific point – simple and straightforward. When we bring something new in, we should let something old go.

This flyer is a guide to cutting clutter and getting organized. Following some of these guidelines can help you free up time and give you a fresh atmosphere to live in. Don't be afraid to purge your home of outdated or unused items. And on the reverse side, you will find several tips to stay organized in different areas around the house.

Creating order in your home doesn't have to be an ordeal. Cutting clutter can be done one room at a time over a week or even several months, and if you do it right, it can be fun and create new possibilities for your home. Having everything in its place is a wonderful thing!

In the same vein of helpful hints and more expert ways to do things than some of us have figured out, I am planning to host more classes (as part of my service to you) in the upcoming months and I would appreciate your feedback. Some of my thoughts:

- Another feng shui class, of course. Cynthia Chomos will be presenting a practical view of the art of placement and energy – Saturday, January 19th
- Creative art choice and placement (beyond the 3-pictures-to-a-wall style); many thanks to our instructor, Doug Taylor, for taking the time to do this for us in his coastal Seahurst home – we're thinking of a Saturday in November
- Simplifying your home's contents and creating a "composed domain" to live in
- Using affirmations to rewrite how we talk to ourselves (these can be amazingly effective)
- A natural decoration class (in early March) with advice on how to choose outdoor plant pots and what to put in them... with a trip to Molbaks after with our instructor along to help.

- And would there be any interest in a showing of “The Secret” at my home? I’m sure pizza and popcorn could be arranged!

Please let me know what might be of interest to you. It is a pleasure to bring people together and share thoughts and ideas (and chocolate! There’s usually chocolate at these!). And Stu and I do enjoy sharing our home with you.

Have you received yours yet? We have instituted a quarterly update (email for those of you that we have an email address for) on what is going on in the market near your home. I always like to know; I’m assuming you’d like to know too?! Please look for an email message from Bob with attached listings so that you can see what is currently on the market, and what that house nearby sold for last month... And if what you get raises any questions, please don’t hesitate to call.

Meanwhile, as we head into the Fall season, it is also time to start the reminders:

Safety first!

- *Please* be sure to have your gas furnace serviced if you did not have it done last year. It’s not just about keeping clean filters in it (although that is also imperative), but be safe... be sure that all components are working correctly.
- Check the carbon monoxide detectors in your bedrooms (again, if there is any gas in your home) to be sure they are working appropriately
- Change the batteries in your smoke alarms (have you noticed that they only seem to start chirping at 2am?)

Preventive maintenance next!

- If you have an outdoor sprinkler system, it’s always wise to have it shut down for the colder months
- The rains will be coming again – it’s also a good time to have your roof air cleaned and moss treated. Make sure your vendor signs up to tell you if anything looks like it needs the attention of a qualified roofer (ours will!).
 - And if your roof is older and you have any thoughts that it might be wearing here and there, the roofer we always recommend will do an inspection for you
- Most roof cleaners will also clean gutters and windows... Why not round the whole package out? Especially making sure your gutters are ready for the rain.

Please let me hear from you – about the classes, to give you the right vendor for your specific need, to get your feedback on the market updates... And, of course, I’ll check in with you too! Know anyone else who should get this? Happy to help there, too.

Sincerely,



Oh, by the way®...if you know of someone who would appreciate the level of service I provide, please call me with their name and business number, and I’ll be happy to follow up and take great care of them.



Less is more

How to simplify, pare down and focus on what's really important.

It's called the big box syndrome. We buy more stuff at big-box retailers. We drive bigger cars to get all of that stuff home. We have bigger homes to put everything in. And somehow we *still* don't seem to have enough room for everything.

Here are some specifics: In the 1950's, the average woman in the U.S. had four pairs of shoes. Today, it's thirteen pairs (and many more for a lot of women).¹ In 1970, the average size of a home was 1,400 square feet. Today, it's 2,340 square feet.² So, if more space and more clutter go hand in hand, even with that additional space, how can you get clutter under control?

1. Pretend that you are moving.

It's time to pare down. If you had to move, would you take it with you? Do you really need three hair dryers? Or what about all of those books; do you really need to keep all of them? Donate what you don't need.

2. Keep only what you love.

Ask yourself, do you really have to keep it? If not, go ahead and get rid of it. Put more focus on using the things that bring you happiness.

3. The benefits of less.

Less stuff equals more time. With less stuff, there's less to clean, organize and dust. With less stuff, your house looks uncluttered and cleaner. Let this motivate you.

4. Learn to love containers.

Containers instantly add order to chaos, and are the secret weapon of organizers everywhere. Put all the kids' shoes in a tub, the newspapers in a bucket, fingernail polish in a basket, and so on.

5. Everything in its place.

Yes, this is something your mother always said, but she was right. When everything has a place on a shelf, in a cabinet or in a bin, you'll avoid counter clutter and junk-filled drawers.

6. Remember the two-year rule.

If you haven't used something for two years, chances are you won't use it again. This particularly applies to clothes.

7. Don't get buried under sentimentality.

Sure, it's nice to keep possessions you cherish, but do you really need your high school prom dress? If you are keeping your wedding dress, have it professionally boxed at a dry cleaners and put it in storage. And your children's collection of stuffed animals? Keep one to pass on to the next generation, then donate the rest.

8. One in and one out.

If something new comes in the house, something old has to go out. This rule is pivotal to maintaining the simple, clutter-free existence you've worked so hard to achieve.

9. Maximize your storage.

There are all sorts of helpful items these days that help you make the most of small spaces. Ottomans with removable tops are the perfect place to store toys, board games or extra bedding. And under-bed baskets are great for storing large or awkward items.

10. Organize by bits.

It's going to take awhile to go through your entire house—after all, it may have taken you up to twenty years to acquire all of your current clutter—so be easy on yourself and try not to attempt too much in one sitting. Start with one closet and give yourself a six-hour limit.



What to do with your stuff

Donate to charity

> charityguide.org
> justgive.org
> goodwill.org

Sell it online

> ebay.com
> i-soldit.com
> craigslist.org



¹ Source: SRBI Public Affairs, March 2006: www.srbi.com/time_poll_arc22.html

² Source: National Association of Home Builders: www.nahb.org/news_details.aspx?newsID=1483

Tidy Tips

Simple Steps to Help you Achieve Organized Bliss.

Controlling the paper chase.

If stacks of paper are overwhelming your kitchen counters, desktop and tabletops, here are a few quick ways to get them under control:

- **Have your recycle bin ready.** When you bring in the mail, toss out the junk mail right away.
- **Read and route.** When paperwork enters the house, read it and route it to the other appropriate family members.
- **Create in-baskets for everyone.** Every family member gets one for signed permission slips, phone messages, bills, etc.
- **Keep a communal calendar.** Post everyone's schedule on one calendar, and keep all schedules and invites in a binder for backup.
- **Take bill paying online.** You can receive and pay your bills on the Internet for a happy, paperless existence.

Secret weapons.

Essential tools that help you contain clutter.

- **Over-the-door vinyl shoe organizers.** These aren't just for shoes anymore. Install one on the closet door in your child's room for an easy place to put small toys.
- **Small stacking bins with drawers.** Use a few of these in a cabinet—one for first aid, one for kiddie medicine. You can pull out the entire drawer for easy access.
- **Sliding shelf baskets.** You can buy these in a variety of home improvement stores. Install one in the pantry and you'll be able to pull out everything on the shelf. No more finding four-year old cans of soup way in the back behind stacks of pasta boxes!
- **Sub shelves.** These help you create a shelf within a shelf and are especially handy for tall cabinets with few shelves. For example, install the extra shelf, put plates on the bottom shelf and then place mugs or glasses on top of the sub-shelf unit.

Make yourself at home.

Just moving in? Making yourself at home in your new surroundings is about more than unpacking. Below are a couple of organizational tips you can follow to make your new house *your* home.

- **Closet organizers.** Before you put anything in your closets, if you have it in your budget, upgrade your closet systems.
- **Get a great garage.** Once most people settle into their homes, it's commonplace for their garages to become the catch-all storage area for anything and everything. Take the opportunity to establish a storage system in your garage right away, and in six months, you still might be able to park your car in there!
- **Safety first.** Locate the closest police and fire stations as well as hospitals. Post emergency phone numbers near the phone. Make sure smoke alarms are installed and working. Is there a fire extinguisher? If not, purchase one and store it in an easily-accessed area.

Straighten up the house.

Once you've organized the house, keeping it that way is easier.

- **Do one room at a time.** Attack one room at a time, even if it's one room a day (or one room a week).
- **No zigzagging.** Have a plan to start at one end of the room and methodically work your way across.
- **Go for instant gratification.** Do the things that make the biggest difference first. Make the bed. Recycle the stack of newspapers. Put away the laundry.
- **Get it out.** If something belongs in another room, put it there.
- **Baby steps.** Avoid going from one floor of your home to another without returning an item to where it belongs. Keep a basket next to the stairs to collect items that need to be put away, and grab one each time you go by.