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New Year a time to get organized

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January is the month of renewal, of promises made and perhaps not kept, of fresh starts and new ideas. Not surprisingly, for professional organizers all over the world, it is also Get Organized Month, according to the National Association of Professional Organizers.

Professional organizers – and there are many in the Main Line area – know that no matter how much money, drive or focus a person has, organizing one's time, paperwork or business is challenging.

Berwyn resident and certified professional organizer Anna Sicalides says she is not so much a fan of unattainable and fleeting New Year's resolutions but that setting goals and breaking them into small pieces to chip away at over time can work.

January is a good time of year to start this process, she said, because people tend to be hunkered down in the house more, they are reviewing financials from the previous year and it's a big time of year for reflection in general.

So the time is right to identify your issues and create systems to manage them.

Wayne-based certified professional organizer Darla DeMorrow says that the challenge people bring up to her most frequently is paper clutter.

On Jan. 11 DeMorrow gave a free talk at the Tredyffrin Library on organizing paperwork in your "home office," even if you don't have an actual home office.

"I'm a believer that if you run a household you are running a small business, and you ought to make room for all the information – and paper – that comes with it," she said. "The question I always get is, 'How can I get the paper off my kitchen counter?' It's universal."

DeMorrow covered some simple systems for organizing that can be used whether you have an entire office or just a simple file box.

"I'm really big on self-maintaining systems," she said. "If you spend the time to get organized you don't want to have to take a day or half-day to keep doing that throughout the year. It should tell you what to keep, how long to keep it and when to get rid of it."

But one size definitely does not fit all in the organization game, Sicalides said.

While she said she believes "organization is the keystone of success," it means "so many different things to so many different people."

Being organized does not necessarily mean having a minimalist space with nothing in it. But it does mean having a home for everything you have.

Sicalides knows the challenge of that. Living in a 200-year-old farmhouse with barely any closets, she has had to come up with some unique solutions for everything in her home. But she knows where all three Windex bottles are always kept in her house, for example. Do you?

“If your house is in good shape, you won’t spin your wheels to look for things; you can spend your time how you want to spend it,” she said. “It’s about you having control.”

Both Sicalides and DeMorrow work with all types of people and families from various backgrounds, income levels and with different problems and goals. As certified professional organizers, both keep up with continuing-education requirements and attend industry events.

Sicalides specializes in “high-performance” families. DeMorrow is certified in interior redesign, home staging and Color with No Regrets, a professional color-choice system.

In addition to free events like the one Jan. 11, DeMorrow also runs occasional sessions and classes on various organizing topics. She also offers a free 30-minute in-home consultation, she said.

She said professional organizers are not just for the wealthy and they can actually save people a lot of money. They can help clients in organizing tax-deductible donations, avoiding late fees and penalties, and earning cash by holding garage sales.

Everybody has a blind spot, a weakness that prevents them from achieving what they want in a timely manner, DeMorrow said. Professional organizers work to help their clients create and implement solutions, but individuals can also use these basics to help themselves start – and end – the new year organized.

Just like with any other self-improvement activity, DeMorrow said people can start addressing their organizational issues this year by getting some help, whether that be from a professional or from a book or Web site.

Visit DeMorrow’s Web site, heartworkorg.com, for 31 free organizing tips. Sicalides’ Web site is Annaorganizesu.com.

Other Web sites to check out include flylady.net and messies.com.

URL: http://www.mainlinemedianews.com/articles/2011/01/19/main_line_suburban_life/news/doc4d376f0e7266f060828638.prt

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