

Next on list: get organized

Jim Hart - 12/28/05

A little over a year ago, Danielle Liu's friend, Melissa, called Liu and excitedly explained how her life had been transformed. Melissa had hired a professional organizer and was extremely happy with the results.

"Melissa called me the next day and said, 'This is the career for you,'" Liu recalled. "And I started my business the very next day."

With her knowledge of the innate organizational abilities that Liu previously had been volunteering, Melissa instinctively knew that her close friend would excel as an organizer.

Now that her business, Totally Orderly LLC, has been established in the West Linn-Lake Oswego area for a number of months, Liu is on a high. She has joined the more than 3,000 members of the National Association of Professional Organizers, and said she is happy that she has a career matching her personality and skills.

Her early educational endeavors, with a bachelor's in psychology and a master's in public administration, assist her in matching organization techniques to each client's unique personality and lifestyle.

Liu is overflowing with ideas to help people adjust their habits and become more efficient — the end goal to give them more time to spend with the activities they value.

"We are all living frantic lives," she said, "and everybody is searching for another member (Liu) to be on their 'team.' You've got housekeepers, landscapers and physical trainers, and many people need help with organizing. It's all about quality of life."

Liu says people have increasing amounts of "stuff," but they're having trouble enjoying their lives because they lack the time to achieve the success they desire.

"Sometimes it's the lack of organization that is standing in the way," she said. "A professional organizer can help people with time management, clutter control, paper flow and achieving goals."

Liu predicts that there never will be a paperless society, since it comes to our homes and offices in increasing quantities.

"People are drowning in it," she said. "We need to think of ways to control it and manage it, thus saving time and money."

Organizing, Liu says, is about people's values and their priorities. That's why the organizational strategies she brings to Totally Orderly, LLC, not only include rearranging possessions, but also purging homes and offices of clutter.

"If you can eliminate unnecessary tasks such as taking 10 minutes to find your keys or paying late bills," she said, "you will have time to do the things that are important in your life."

Examples of Liu's work include creating systems of dealing with such activities as sorting incoming mail and training children to place their belongings in assigned locations

"In many homes, there is not an assigned spot for every item in the house," Liu said. "The goal isn't not to live — for everything to always be neatly stowed in its appropriate place. The idea is that, after an activity is done, each item goes back to its place."

To make minor changes in lifestyles, Liu's clients need a bit of self-motivation — since the desire to hold onto things is deep-rooted. Liu recognizes that there are people who have been disorganized for years as well as people whose lives are temporarily chaotic.

But a professional organizer can help those who have a bit of motivation to change and succeed, she says.

Liu is available to organize a space as large as an entire house or as small as a closet.

The process includes assessing the space, sorting the items in the space, purging the unnecessary items, placing remaining items in labeled containers and planning a maintenance program.

Getting organized is almost always on everyone's New Year's Resolution list, Liu says. "And it's usually still there the next year, she said. "This year, let's do it right and bring in a professional."

Liu is available for appointments five days a week and weekends, on request. Consultations as well as hands-on assistance are charged by the hour. Workshops and speaking engagements are offered for flat-rate fees. For an appointment or more information, call 503-650-9410 or visit Liu's Internet Web site at www.totallyorderly.com.



Photo by Jim Hart

Professional organizer Danielle Liu stands inside her kitchen pantry, showing some of her organization of everyday items. Having canned goods on mini-risers and all of the kids' lunch materials on the same shelf, she says, add to the efficiency of daily tasks.